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AILIE GILROY

A SCOTTISH STORY

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BY

WILLIAM CHAMBERS, LL.D.

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&c.

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Some years ago, AILIE GILROY asked me to write her story, in the hope, as she said, that it might 'do good.' I promised to comply with the request, if I survived her. The promise is kept.

The composition, which whiled away a few idle hours on the shores of the Mediterranean in the spring of the present year, was that kind of luxury to the feelings which we enjoy in hanging chaplets of flowers over the grave of one who is held by us in affectionate remembrance.

Echoing the wish of the gentle and confiding AILIE, may her story 'do good.'

W. C.

September 1872.

AILIE GILROY.

CHAPTER I.

THE PORTOBELLO OMNIBUS.

‘FINE weather at last,’ said Mrs Gilroy, as she awoke one May morning, and glanced at the window of her apartment, situated in the uppermost floor of a common stair, in one of the cross streets in the modern part of Edinburgh. ‘I think it will be a beautiful day, and that I shall be able to make out my long-promised visit to Mrs Pringle in Portobello. Get up, Ailie; and tell me how it looks outside.’

Ailie, who was thus addressed, was a daughter of the lady, and slept in a small closet entering from the bedroom. At her mother’s request, she immediately arose; and looking out, proceeded to give her opinion of the weather. ‘I think,’ she

said, after a scrutiny for a few minutes, 'it is likely to be a fine day. The sky is clear, with light fleecy clouds. But, mother, here's a strange sight. There is a pretty pigeon, pure white, on the window-sole; and it was not the least frightened when I drew up the blind. It is walking about, and cooing so innocently. Its pretty eyes are shining like diamonds. I wonder what it can mean by walking about on the window-sole!'

'Let it alone, Ailie; do not disturb it,' cried the mother. 'I ken finely what it means. It is a white dove, and comes to us as a sign of good luck. I am sure something grand is going to happen; and I am now more than ever resolved to go to-day to Portobello. And, Ailie, I will take you with me. The country air will do you good, and it will be a nice little jaunt for you.'

Though it was to be only a day's excursion, Ailie was delighted at the prospect of the jaunt; for she had latterly been kept pretty closely at her studies. As requested, she did not disturb the pigeon, or 'white dove,' as her mother called it; but softly letting down the blind, retreated to bed till it was time to rise at the accustomed hour.

Such was the little incident that occurred in the dwelling of the Gilroys on the morning of the day

we speak of. Trifling and whimsical as it may appear, it is not to be passed over with indifference, for it might be called the starting-point of a long and remarkable domestic drama.

The Gilroys were an old and respectable family, more noted for their kindly disposition than for their foresight or breadth of intelligence. Shortly before our story opens, Mr Gilroy had died, leaving a widow and large family of sons and daughters—the daughters being much the more numerous. According to a familiar saying in Scotland, the poor man ‘had fallen into a family.’ Embarrassing as this accidental circumstance may have been to Mr Gilroy, it did not in the least discompose his wife. She had eleven children ; and, as if these were not enough, she was heard to say she should have ‘liked to complete the dozen, for she was never so happy as when she was among bairns.’ A more hopeful and cheerful little woman can scarcely be imagined. Taking things easily, she trusted greatly to good luck, believed in omens, and, as a protection against evil influences, took care to have always an old horse-shoe nailed to the back of her door.

The horse-shoe did not prevent the family from being sometimes in difficulties, nor could it save the life of Gilroy, when the time came for him to

quit the world, leaving a widow with eight daughters and three sons to carry on the battle of existence. The advantage of having a large family was now apparent. Had Mrs Gilroy been left to struggle with only two or three children, she might have struggled long enough unnoticed. But eleven!—it was dreadful. Public compassion was roused, and people from all directions hastened to tender offers of succour. A benevolent old gentleman took Joseph, the eldest son, to provide for him, at a distance, in one of the learned professions. The next son, Tom, was, by 'good interest,' placed in a situation in a bank. The youngest son, Dugald, a merry little fellow with a keen sense of humour, was so fortunate as to be taken apprentice into an extensive manufacturing concern, in which he acquitted himself creditably. As for the girls, they possessed a wonderful versatility of talent. Under favour of friendly patronage, the three elder, Henny, Nancy, and Lucy, betook themselves to teaching music, drawing, Poona-painting, and so on, with considerable success. Bessie and Mysie, less ambitious of outdoor distinction, helped in domestic matters, and, by their remarkable handiness, were able to carry on the business of the household, without resorting to the ordinary kind

of hired assistance. Maggie and Teeny were as yet too young for any occupation, and it seemed uncertain into what type of character they would ultimately develop.

What of Ailie?

When I first knew Ailie Gilroy, she was but a girl in her teens. It was by accident we became acquainted. She called with a message from her brother Dugald, to whom I had become known through school relationships. Her appearance was startling, as she tripped like an airy vision up to the dwelling. Tall, slender in form, with bright auburn ringlets, and expressive features marked by a kindly nature, she carried in her hand a guitar, on which she had, though still young, been giving some lessons to a family in the neighbourhood. Being lightly dressed, a more sylph-like creature could hardly be pictured. Guileless innocence was in her looks. She might have been taken for the embodiment of a wandering glee-maiden in a medieval romance.

Introduced to the family by Dugald, I found that Ailie was the pet of brothers and sisters. Her beauty and delicacy, her slight figure, her constant good-humour, and her obliging disposition, made her a peculiar favourite. Ailie, if required, would lend assistance like some of the

others in household operations, but being essentially lady-like, she was properly reserved to act a part on ceremonial occasions, when her sisters found it more agreeable to their nature to occupy themselves usefully behind backs. Ailie's taste for music was perhaps only a little more keen than that of her sisters. The Gilroys had all a passion for music. They would rather have expended any spare money on a public concert, or to hear some famed vocalist like Catalani, than on any ordinary matter of personal comfort. Though occasionally pinched as regards means, they maintained a character for gentility. They never complained of the world using them ill, and would have died sooner than do anything shabby or derogatory to their reputation. Although many might smile, or even laugh outright, at some of their whimsicalities, it was impossible not to hold them in esteem. All liked the Gilroys. They did so many droll, and said so many funny, things, as to be a source of continual amusement to their friends.

Our duty, however, is to confine ourselves more specially to the character and fortunes of Ailie. With all her good looks and winning manners, this young lady was constrained by circumstances to prepare herself for the profession of a governess.

But she was cheerfully resigned to her lot. And her mother, as was proper, kept a sharp look-out for a suitable situation for this her favourite daughter.

Things were in this anticipatory condition, when, on that fine May morning, the thought of a day's excursion to Portobello burst on the mind of the old lady ; the notion of making this little jaunt, as we have seen, being materially strengthened by what seemed a pleasing omen, the appearance of the white pigeon on the window-sole.

Only a short time previously, omnibuses, as a novelty, began to run between Edinburgh and Portobello, and as yet were not quite popularised. They started, as they still do, at the east end of Princes Street, and occupied about three-quarters of an hour in the journey. It was to one of these useful conveyances that Mrs Gilroy and her daughter Ailie made their way,—the old lady dressed in a plain widow's garb, and the younger smartened up for the occasion, with fresh pink ribbons on her gipsy straw bonnet, and wearing a pair of new gloves of a delicate purple tint. In one of her hands she carried a parasol, either to avert the rays of the sun, or screen the bonnet from a shower of rain, should such unexpectedly fall. A neat set-out, as all her sisters assured her.

The omnibus in which the two took their seats was not crowded—not even moderately filled. The driver having a faint hope that one or two more passengers would cast up, hung about for a few moments after the authorised hour for moving off had sounded from the clock of the General Register House. In this laudable anxiety for an increase of traffic, he had for coadjutor a humble but obliging hanger-on, popularly known as Jamie—a weirdless being whose eyes and mouth were much off the level, and whose poor clothing, held together with pins and bits of string, gave token of too frequent visits to a public-house conveniently situated for him in the adjoining sunk area.

On being appealed to by the driver, Jamie, as a vigilant scout, looked in various directions to the best of his ability. But as no amount of investigation in looking up the street or down the street, or along the North Bridge, gave the slightest indication of a customer, the vehicle was driven off—yet so slowly, as if loath to depart on its journey. The slight delay had not been in vain. When getting past the corner of Waterloo Place, the omnibus was suddenly hailed by a gentleman who emerged from the top of Leith Street, and the driver very gladly pulled up.

The new arrival was a portly gentleman, a little

breathless from running, and happy in being not too late to be left behind. The two ladies were not displeased with this addition to the party. The stranger, who edged towards them, was prepossessing in general aspect. In the prime of life, of a dark complexion, and dressed with scrupulous neatness, he might, from appearance, be a man of some social distinction. On the breast of his shirt shone a handsome brooch, and when he had taken off his left-hand glove, he was seen to have a brilliant of the finest water on his fourth finger, acting as a guard to a ring of a plainer description. A very nice man in all respects, as the mother and daughter reasonably thought. They felt safe in his companionship during the short journey, and each secretly resolved not to be backward in meeting any polite advances he might be pleased to make.

‘Rather a warm day, this, madam,’ said the stranger to the elderly lady. ‘I was very nearly losing the omnibus, and should have been sorry to have to walk. It would have been fatiguing to walk in such hot weather.’

‘You may say that, sir,’ rejoined the lady. ‘It’s a great comfort, an omnibus. I often say that. I mind since there was nothing of the kind. All you could get was a ticket for the Musselburgh

coach from Swanston's in the High Street, that gaed down by the Abbey-hill. We should be thankful for our mercies. If it had not been for the omnibus, I could not this day have gone with my daughter to Portobello.'

'Very true,' responded her fellow-traveller-sympathisingly. 'We have all reason to be thankful for the many improvements in modern society, and not the least of our blessings is the Portobello omnibus. This is your daughter, you say'—lifting his hat and bowing—'a very handsome, and, I have no doubt, a most accomplished young lady.'

'Weel, sir, we have done our best to give her a first-rate education, and if she's no clever, it's not for want of expense—French, music, geography, drawing, and a number of other things for young ladies. And I have for some time been looking for a situation for her as a governess.'

'Madam,' said the gentleman with a degree of delighted surprise, 'this is altogether extraordinary. I am at this very moment seeking for a governess for my daughters—three girls, poor things, left without a mother to watch over and instruct them. For the sake of their health, I have brought them from the mining districts in the north of England to Portobello, which I heard was a very healthy place. Such I have found it to be, also very quiet

and respectable—a very pleasant place, indeed. We are settled in a small villa at the foot of Tower Street, with a delightful view of the sea. Perhaps you will be so kind as call, and who knows but we may arrange matters. Here is my card.'

Mrs Gilroy was all in a flutter as she took the card, and perused it: 'Mr Badsley, Hawthorn Villa, Tower Street, Portobello.' The circumstance of falling in so easily with a situation for Ailie, seemed almost miraculous. Without trouble or expense, here the very thing that was wanted had cast up. Now was she confirmed in her opinion, that the 'white dove,' which had so strangely appeared on the window-sole, was ominous of something good. The whole thing was clear to her understanding. What a fortunate affair for Ailie was this journey to Portobello!

Overcome with these considerations, she resolved to visit this very genteel and polite widower at his villa. And this she did, after calling on her friend Mrs Pringle, who did not know much about Badsley; only that he was an English stranger, who lived very quietly, and was little seen by neighbours. At the widower's residence, she found everything most proper and comfortable. A very staid-looking female servant, whom she heard

addressed as Jenny, opened the door. The three motherless girls were paraded for Ailie's inspection ; and from their age and docility, they seemed to be qualified to pass under her administration. Terms were easily adjusted. The liberal-minded father professed to be indifferent as to expense.

The prospect of settling Ailie in her first situation at a salary of forty pounds a year, in a locality so eligible, was charming. Yet, with an instinctive feeling of what was right in the circumstances, the fond mother hinted at the propriety of taking a day or two to consider the matter, and also to consult her son Tom, who now filled the office of head-clerk, or cashier, in one of the private banks, or, more correctly, bill-broking establishments, which then existed in Edinburgh, the name of which she specified.

‘I am delighted with your prudence, madam,’ said the widower. ‘Nothing can be more correct than your taking time to consider, and to consult, in a matter so very delicate ; but allow me to ask if that be your son, who is so remarkable for his good looks and elegant figure, fine dark eyes, glossy auburn hair, always nicely brushed, wears red coral studs, and has neat boots of polished leather ? I think I have noticed him in the street

with a Petersham hat—a very handsome and polite young man—one generally admired.’

‘That’s him, sir, that’s him; that’s the very man!’ exclaimed the lady. ‘It’s wonderful how you should know him.’

‘Not the least wonderful, my good lady. I have had many transactions with the young gentleman in the way of banking business. I recommend you to speak to him about me by all means; and it will give me pleasure to hear from you at your leisure.’

So saying, the interview terminated. As the pair, mother and daughter, made their way back to the omnibus, there were mutual congratulations. Ailie, who was generally submissive and willing to be directed, saw nothing to object to in the proposed arrangement. And the mother was volubly talkative of the occurrence, so singularly prognosticated by the hopeful omen of the white dove that morning on the window-sole. What extraordinary news she would have to narrate as soon as she got within the family circle!

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT MINER—FAMILY COGITATIONS.

‘**G**RAND news, grand news!’ shouted Mrs Gilroy, as soon as she recovered her breath, after climbing the long stair, and getting within the dwelling! ‘Ailie’s provided for! Ailie’s provided for! Come a’, and hear the news.’

There was a general crowding round the old lady, as she narrated the day’s exploits. All about the omnibus; and the genteel stranger, and his highly respectable villa in Tower Street; and the decent-looking woman-servant who opened the door; and the comfortable parlour, with a Brussels carpet which could not have cost less than five shillings and ninepence a yard; and the three quietly disposed girls; and their father’s generous offer of forty pounds a year to take charge of them; and what a real fine man Mr Badsley was; and, above all, how wonderful it was that he should be acquainted with her son

Tom. Never had she known such an extraordinary concatenation of circumstances. What would the cashier say when he came in and heard what had taken place?

The agitation created by the budget of intelligence had barely subsided, when Tom—who, it must be observed, was the adviser-general of the family—came home to dinner. As soon as he had hung up his ‘Petersham’ and assumed a pair of dress slippers, the mother eagerly opened upon him with the account of the day’s adventures. Distrustful of their own opinion, all hung with some anxiety on the judgment of the cashier. Patiently did Tom listen to a narration of the whole affair, before he opened his lips. He then spoke emphatically; and it was an immense relief to know that he entertained a high respect for the widower and his commercial status.

‘Are you,’ said he, ‘so ignorant of Edinburgh life as not to know who Mr Badsley is, or, to give his name in full, Charles Adolphus Badsley, his ordinary signature being C. A. Badsley?’

‘We never heard of him before,’ replied the mother and her daughters; ‘and we shall be glad if you will tell us.’

‘Why,’ answered Tom, ‘Mr Badsley is one of the most remarkable men of the day. Edinburgh

is honoured by his visits. He does a great deal of business with the bank. His transactions are various, and to an enormous amount. He is understood to have an extensive mining connection in the counties of Northumberland and Durham. One of his coal-pits, situated near Sunderland, is no less than eight hundred feet deep, and three miles in extent.

The mother and sisters held up their hands in amazement.

‘Yes,’ continued the cashier, ‘such is the case ; it is the greatest coal-pit in the world. The quantity of coal excavated is incredible. But Mr Badsley is connected with other coal-mines in that district, and is accordingly spoken of as the Great Miner. That is the designation by which he is best known. As for his commercial undertakings generally, they are endless. He has correspondents in Hamburg, Lübeck, Amsterdam, London, Liverpool, and a prodigious number of other places. His bills are as good as the Bank of England. As far as I know, the Great Miner is rather retiring in manner. He does not go much into general society ; but occupies himself, it is said, in literary recreation. He is, however, punctilious about his dress ; and by means of his fine gentlemanly air, his large brooch, his massive

gold chain, and resplendent diamond ring, he is the envy and marvel of Princes Street. It would undoubtedly be a fortunate thing for Ailie if she were to be employed by him as a governess. The intelligence of such an event is almost too good news to be true.'

In these lucid explanations of the cashier, who ought to know best, were proofs positive of the integrity, the wealth, the good taste, and other estimable qualities of the widower, who had been so fortunately fallen in with. The mother overflowed with emotions of delight. Ailie was pleased. Nancy, the second daughter, who was of a maturely marriageable age, said she was dying to see the Great Miner who caused so extraordinary a sensation in Princes Street; and she appealed to the whole assembled family if it would not be a proper thing, as a mark of respect, to invite him to a small evening party: such, she represented, being the best way of arranging matters connected with Ailie.

The mother had serious doubts as to the propriety of this step. 'He's ower grand a man,' she said, 'to ask to tea. What could we give him?'

'There need be no fears about his entertainment,' observed Lucy, the third daughter. 'Several of us can play on the piano, and we can give him

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the matter. 'No doubt as to the propriety of the plan,' said the grandfather, 'but she must give him notice first. What do you think?' 'About his education,' said the daughter. 'Several of us can give him

some music. Nancy will rattle over that splendid piece of Beethoven, of which she is so fond, and has played at so many evening parties. I will, if required, play a few Scots airs. And Ailie will do a little with the guitar.'

'Ay, ay,' struck in Mrs Gilroy. 'Music is all very fine, but what can we give him to eat? Answer me that.'

'Hoots,' responded Bessie, who was a particularly good manager in domestic affairs, 'what should we give him but some o' Hutchison's cookies? and as for supper, we can hae a jelly and twa-three tippenny tarts.'

Lucy, a very lively young lady, threw out the suggestion that Dugald might materially contribute to the general amusement, by telling some of his funny stories—'that story, for instance, about the laddie who paid a shilling for a ticket in the lottery of a mountebank on the Links, and who, having been so lucky as draw the prize of a good fat sheep, was shamefully laughed out of it by the jeers and grimaces of the clown. Or, Dugald,' said she, 'you might give us the play of the soo.'

'The soo would never do for entertaining the Great Miner,' exclaimed several voices.

The soo, as it was called, was a huge white cat, a great favourite in the family, that had been

trained by Dugald to perform a species of parlour comedy, in company with a small dog, named Jacky. The two had an understanding with each other, that in their romps it was to be all fun and sham—no real biting or scratching. The first act in the drama began by the soo giving Jacky a smart pat on the side of the head, which being taken as an affront, there was a chase round the room; the soo turning and winding at full speed with the dog in pursuit, and then leaping on chairs and tables, from which it affected to look down with contempt on Jacky—the spectators laughing at a great rate, and speculating on the chances of Jacky catching the soo. In the next act, the soo was put under the carpet, and the fun consisted in Jacky trying to get hold of it through the folds, which he good-naturedly made a point of never doing. At this scene, the screaming and laughing became uproarious. ‘Well done the soo!’ and ‘Well done Jacky!’ were shouted by Dugald, till at length the soo taking an opportunity to make its escape, the performance came to a close.

From this brief sketch of the play of the soo, it will be seen that Lucy had inconsiderately proposed it for the entertainment of so distinguished a personage as the Great Miner. The performance,

though considered to be a very pretty piece of pleasantry, could not, with any regard to propriety, be offered for the amusement of Mr Badsley. The proposal was, therefore, summarily dismissed ; but there were no objections to Dugald telling the story about the laddie.

‘I have no doubt you’ll tell it,’ said Lucy coaxingly.

‘I am not so sure about that,’ observed Dugald. ‘Before I promise to tell the story about the laddie, or anything else, I must know what strangers are to be invited.’

Several disapproved of asking strangers ; for if they asked one, they must, to avoid giving offence, ask a number. Nancy thought that, in honour of Mr Badsley, two or three persons in a good position in society might be invited. ‘Why not,’ she said, ‘ask Lady Duntaskin ?’

‘Lady Duntaskin!’ screamed the mother in unison with Henny. ‘How dare we ask such a lady! Are you mad?’

‘No madness in the matter,’ replied Nancy, who had her own notions on the subject. ‘I happen to know Lady Duntaskin, and have met her at several parties—parties even on common stairs, though, I must say, never one on a third flat. And I think she would come if we asked her.’

The lady in question was the widow of Sir Joseph Duntaskin, who had been knighted for having on one occasion performed that important service to the state, of opening a door to George IV. in the course of a public ceremonial. Retired, and in not very affluent circumstances, Lady Duntaskin improved her means of living by accepting invitations to dinner and evening parties. In Edinburgh, where there is a scarcity of titles, her ladyship was in constant request—not that people cared a farthing for her, and rather thought her a commonplace person intellectually ; but because it sounded well to have the name, Lady Duntaskin, shouted out by servants, and to be able to say: ‘ Lady Duntaskin, would you be pleased to take a seat near the fire’—‘ Lady Duntaskin, allow me to help you to a little of this’—‘ Lady Duntaskin, have you read the new novel of Sir Walter, and what does your ladyship think of it?’—the frequent repetition of lady and ladyship giving, as was believed, a peculiarly aristocratic character to any party, however plebeian. Miss Nancy Gilroy was therefore, in a sense, warranted in propounding the idea of inviting Lady Duntaskin to the tea-party, and we doubt not that her ladyship would have accepted the invitation, if nothing better had been in the field. ‘ Nancy’s overture, however, after some

discussion, was outvoted, and there was again a general disapproval of asking strangers. Dugald stood out against this exclusiveness, and put his objections on personal grounds.

‘How,’ he very properly inquired, ‘can any one try to be amusing, unless there be somebody to be amused? If you will let me ask Frank Lorimer, and Bob Cameron, and Johnny Hutchison, I might perhaps tell some story to laugh at.’

There was an instantaneous exclamation against the proposal of inviting Johnny Hutchison, who was the eldest son of Hutchison the baker, from whom was to come the supply of cookies. Frank Lorimer and Bob Cameron were well enough; but what if Mr Badsley should take it into his head to ask who Johnny was?

‘If he were to speer such a question,’ said Dugald, ‘I would tell him that Johnny was the son of a great corn-merchant, which would be quite true; and if everything was known, it might turn out that old Hutchison was as rich a man and as good a man as the Great Miner, though he did not say much about it.’

‘Dugald,’ said Lucy spiritedly, ‘you are altogether forgetting that Johnny will be away with the powny.’

This reply staggered Dugald a little. He had

for the moment forgot a practice never neglected by the baker, which merits some explanation.

Hutchison was a tradesman of considerable means, realised by a course of assiduous industry, and a degree of economy verging on the narrowest parsimony. From a humble position he had risen to be a noted member of the corporation of bakers, and now, as was proper, exercised some charge over their extensive grinding operations at Canon-mills, an ancient and picturesque village a short way from town, and having the appearance of being nicely dusted over with flour. Short as was the road to the mills, it had become too long for the stiffening limbs of the old baker, who had in consequence purchased a small Shetland pony, on the back of which he made out the journey to and fro daily.

The acquisition was a painful necessity; not that the food of the animal was of any consequence; for what with odd quantities of bran, damaged grain, and bread raspings, the cost of its maintenance was inconsiderable. The vexing thing about Roderick, as the little pony was named, was the outlay of twopence daily in passing through a toll-bar, which was odiously planted between the city and the mills. By no contrivance or shuffle could Hutchison modify or get rid of

this detestable exaction. 'The first time he rode up to the toll-bar with Roderick, he expected to be let off for at most a penny for toll.

'It's a bit sma' beast,' said he, addressing the toll-keeper. 'Look at its wee feet ; they will do very little ill to the road. A penny might pass us ; in fact, I think a halfpenny would be enough.'

'Nothing of the kind,' replied the obdurate toll-man. 'A pony is a horse, and a horse is a horse. I'll thank you for the twopence !'

The paying of the twopence was like drawing the old baker's heart-blood. From that moment, he vowed lasting vengeance against the whole toll-bar system ; though, in reality, as in most cases of revenge, his scheme was damaging to himself. On all occasions, he asked and received a ticket from the toll-man, as a pass to clear about twenty other turnpikes in the district. Every day, on returning from the mills, he made a point of mounting his son on Roderick, and putting the ticket in his hand, despatched him with instructions to 'take the good out of the ticket' by going through several toll-bars in the neighbourhood.

Had Roderick been able to express an opinion on the subject, he would probably have demurred

to these additional and wholly useless perambulations; and Johnny, who had a hatred of being sent away every afternoon in one direction or other, declared he was tired of so much riding about the neighbourhood, where there was nothing new to look at. But old Hutchison was inexorable. He desired not only to be revenged on the turnpike system, but to make something of the unexpired virtue of the ticket. There it was, a twopence-worth, a thing of value for the day. That it should be thrown aside, was inconsistent with all his notions of economy. He accordingly was most peremptory in obliging Johnny to wring as much value as possible out of the ticket. Of course, the wearing of Roderick's shoes might have suggested a reason for at once throwing the ticket in the fire. But that did not involve a visible or present outlay; whereas the payment for the ticket was an instant, a daily, an intolerable drain on the pocket.

It was this daily duty imposed on Johnny of squeezing what may be called the essence out of the toll-ticket, by going through five or six toll-bars, that had been called to the recollection of Dugald, when he hinted at the propriety of inviting that young gentleman to the tea-party.

‘Johnny,’ it was repeated, ‘will be away with the powny.’

‘I ken how to get the better of that,’ answered Dugald. ‘I will tell him to make a round that day of not more than two toll-bars—such as Coltbridge and Dalry—and to be back as early as he can for the party. My other two acquaintances I can readily get, and you should be glad to have them. Frank, if you like, will sing *O Poortith Could!* or *O were I on Parnassus’ Hill!* Bob Cameron will tell some curious things about the Auld Toun, and perhaps he may play on the flute.’

It was seen that Dugald could not be shaken from his purpose. He insisted on having an audience, if he was to be the least funny; and it was at length resolved to let him have his own way. The cashier was more easily dealt with. He had no particular reason for asking any acquaintance. What he chiefly desired was to have some conversation with Mr Badsley regarding the wonderful coal-pit that was eight hundred feet deep; and how the miners got up and down; and whether many of them were killed. On these and other points, he had no doubt there would be much agreeable conversation in the course of the evening.

All was now settled except one thing, which was brought under notice by Mrs Gilroy.

‘I want to ken,’ said she, ‘how the tea is to be served. I’ll hae nane o’ your new-fangled arrangements o’ handing about the cups on a tray; but let all the party sit round the table in the auld-fashioned way, for it is far mair comfortable.’

Here was a fresh bone of contention. Nancy, who had seen more of high life than the others, would not hear of this antiquated practice, and declared that the party must be left to sit anywhere about the room, and have the cups handed to them.

‘But who is to hand them?’ asked the old lady sharply. ‘I would like to ken that, for we have nae servants, except it be auld Eppie Britherstanes that comes every morning to dicht the shoon, and carry out the ass.’

The reference to the poor old charwoman who came every morning to carry out the ashes, and execute some other drudgery, raised a general laugh. Nancy settled the difficulty.

‘Don’t trouble yourself about serving the tea. We’ll all help; and you know that the three young gentlemen who are to be invited by Dugald will gladly hand about the things. Then, keep in

mind that Bessie, in her usually clever way, will have everything placed on the table before any one comes in. And when the things are to be removed, we shall ask Mr Badsley to step into the next room to look at the pictures, so that when we come back, Bessie will have all the things removed. You see all may be arranged beautifully without a single servant. In fact, the want of a servant will never be noticed.'

Mrs Gilroy acquiesced in these well-conceived arrangements, only good-humouredly protesting that 'she did not know what the world was coming to,' and that 'she might as well give up speaking.' All preliminaries being thus happily adjusted, the Great Miner was invited to the evening party; the note being written by Nancy, in her best style of penmanship. This act of diplomacy being effected, the old lady went off to bed in a singularly satisfied frame of mind. She was pleased at the idea of securing so capital a situation for Ailie, and still more pleased with her own shrewdness in perceiving the augury of good-fortune in the visit of the white dove.

'Now, bairns, mind my words,' said she oracularly on retiring for the night. 'It's aye a guid sign when a white dove lichts on your window-sole—and sae guid-nicht.'

Dugald let her be out of the room before he made a very irreverent remark: 'She's making an awfu' piece o' wark about that pigeon. It was just ane o' Professor Dick's white doos. I've seen the hale cleckin' of them in Clyde Street. They're aye fleeing about and settling on window-soles, and it's nae use minding them.'

CHAPTER III.

MRS GILROY'S EVENING PARTY.

THE Great Miner was gratified with the invitation to the party. It was what he specially desired, for he had taken a fancy to strike up an acquaintanceship with the Gilroys. The invitation was accordingly accepted, by a note which rivalled that of Miss Nancy in politeness. In the house of the Gilroys there was forthwith a general commotion. At a female congress held in the drawing-room, it was resolved that the carpet should be lifted, and sent off to be beaten under the auspices of Eppie Britherstanes. Bessie and Mysie undertook to see that the furniture was well polished and dusted. A harp which had got lamentably out of order, was removed to one of the bedrooms. And all else, in the drawing-room and the adjoining parlour, was becomingly set to rights.

At the appointed time, Mr Badsley made his appearance, and was received by the assembled

family in their usually frank and hospitable style. Thanks to Bessie's assiduity, the tea-table was fully equipped. Some cookies from Hutchison's were invitingly laid out on plates of antique and well-preserved china. A silver tea-pot, exhibited only on great occasions, stood ready primed, with a supplementary tea-pot on the hob. The piano-forte stood open, with a piece of music by Beethoven placed on it, as if to indicate what was to be a leading feature of the entertainment.

Dugald's three young friends had come early, and were respectively introduced to Mr Badsley. None of them, however, seemed willing to improve the intimacy. Standing a little in awe of so great a man, they slid quietly into a corner; but, at a hint from Nancy, who autocratically acted as mistress of the ceremonies, they hastened to hand about the tea and the cookies—articles of which, in due course, they had their full share.

There was some surprise in finding that Mr Badsley did not care for tea. He took only a single cup. Whereas the Gilroys considered tea to be a prime article of subsistence. They had in the house, altogether, thirteen tea-pots. First of all, there was a large tea-pot of Britannia metal for the family in its collective capacity. Next came the tea-pots for individual use. Mrs Gilroy

had a tea-pot ; Henny had a tea-pot ; Nancy had a tea-pot ; Lucy had a tea-pot ; Bessie had a tea-pot ; Mysie had a tea-pot. All these were of brown earthenware, with a strong glaze upon them, calculated to stand a good deal of simmering at the side of the kitchen fire ; for, as it was not customary to prepare anything like a regular dinner for the female part of the household, each of the young ladies made a meal of tea whenever it suited her convenience. Besides these tea-pots, there was a tea-pot of a superior order for Tom and Dugald. Lastly, there were several tea-pots of different kinds and capacities for the junior members of the family, and for an ordinary class of evening parties ; the whole group being crowned with the silver tea-pot now exhibited to the eyes of the Great Miner.

The Gilroys, therefore, could not comprehend Mr Badsley's disinclination for tea ; and what equally astonished them was, that on being asked 'if he drank sugar,' he said he did not. When pressed to take another cup, Mr Badsley stated to Mrs Gilroy 'that he had always more pleasure in intellectual converse than in any enjoyment purely physical.'

'Weel, sir,' replied the old lady, 'to be plain with you, I dinna like physic mysel', and gie as

little as possible to the young people. As the tea is nearly over, perhaps you would like some music.'

Nancy, who had been watching her opportunity, remarked that before beginning with the music, she would like to shew Mr Badsley a picture by Nasmyth, a view of Craigcrook, which had been much admired. It was quite at hand in the next room.

'I am a great lover of the fine arts,' responded Mr Badsley, 'and anything by so eminent a painter as Nasmyth must be well worth looking at.' So saying, he followed Nancy and Lucy out of the room.

The Great Miner being decoyed for a few minutes from the apartment by the artifice about the picture, the tea-things were dexterously whipped away by Bessie; and on his return he found everything prepared for the music. Nancy sat down to the piano, and commenced her favourite piece, under cover of which Tom endeavoured to open a conversation respecting the coal-pit that was eight hundred feet deep, and hinted that it would be interesting to know the number of men killed—say, on an average, annually, by explosions of fire-damp, and other accidents. The Great Miner, to his mortification, did not seem to relish inquiries of this kind. He spoke vaguely of the

mining system ; and at the end of what might be called a disjointed rambling conversation, the piece of music was concluded with a loud flourish, and Nancy took a seat near Mr Badsley.

‘I observe a guitar on that side-table,’ said he to this accomplished young lady. ‘It is an instrument I am particularly fond of, from having travelled much in Spain and the south of France, where it is often played. May I inquire who plays on it here?’

Nancy explained that Ailie played on it a little.

Rising with the dignity of a prince, and addressing Ailie, Mr Badsley hoped she would favour him with any trifle on the guitar. Perhaps she could sing one of the lays of the Troubadours. But anything would be acceptable ; and, as an inducement, he added that if she would play one piece, he would endeavour to play another, for he had learned something of the instrument in the course of his travels.

Ailie was sorry she did not know any lay of the Troubadours,—the fact being that she would have had some difficulty in telling who the Troubadours were. She modestly stated that she had not greatly cultivated continental melodies. She could sing only a few Scottish ballads.

‘Madam,’ said the Great Miner eagerly, ‘I dote

on Scottish ballads ; for after all, there is nothing to compare with native music. With Burns's songs I am above all things delighted. What a noble ode, for example, is that one containing those beautifully expressive lines :

The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that !

When I hear those glorious poems of Burns, I regret not being a Scotsman.'

So encouraged, Ailie took up the guitar. Suspending it from her neck by a blue ribbon, she ran her fingers lightly over the wires, and then warbled forth one of Burns's lyrics, *I gaed a waefu' gait yestreen*, which she executed with considerable effect, only going now and then into a falsetto.

The Great Miner complimented her on her singing, as well as her fingering. To make good his promise, he took the guitar from her, and gaily throwing the blue ribbon round his neck, stood forth towards the company with the air of a Troubadour ; his brooch, his massive gold chain, and his ring making all the impression he could possibly desire. After a little artistic fingering of the wires, he began an old English cantata, which he said was probably little known in the north.

SILVIO.

Thee I love, by all that 's true,
More than all things here below,
With a passion far more great,
Than a mortal e'er loved yet.
Still you cry, 'Oh, forbear !'
Love me less, or love sincere.
Still you cry, 'Oh, forbear !'
Love me less, or love sincere.

Love's not a thing of choice, but fate ;
What makes me love makes you to hate ;
With true love's passion in the heart,
Alas ! from thee I ne'er can part ;
Kind or cruel, false or true,
Love I must, and none but you.
Kind or cruel, false or true,
Love I must, and none but you.

Bid the miser quit his store,
And the wretched sigh no more ;
Bid deceit forsake the plain,
And the old grow young again :
Silvio, Silvio, when this you do,
Then I 'll ask no more of you.
Silvio, Silvio, when this you do,
Then I 'll ask no more of you.

The cantata was sung in a powerful baritone voice, and was received with general applause. Nor did Mrs Gilroy and her daughters fail to appreciate Mr Badsley's condescension in trying to entertain the party in a manner so very agreeable.

Gracefully handing the guitar to Ailie, the Great Miner resumed his seat near Miss Nancy, who was pleased to compliment him highly on his singing and playing.

‘It is rare,’ said she, ‘to hear a gentleman play on the guitar, or, indeed, on any musical instrument.’

‘My knowledge, such as it is, of the guitar,’ replied Mr Badsley, ‘was picked up in a very curious manner. A number of years ago, when I was a much younger man, I was sailing as a passenger in a vessel from Marseilles to Genoa. On going on board, the weather was lovely; and all expected to make a rapid and agreeable passage. The Mediterranean, however, is the most treacherous sea in the world. All is fine one moment, and the next a storm rises in a way the most extraordinary. Such, unfortunately, occurred on our voyage. The vessel was driven ashore, and wrecked on a wild part of the coast of the Riviera; and I was the only one who was saved. All the others, poor fellows, were drowned.’

‘What a melancholy thing that was!’ said Nancy.

‘Yes, it was a very sorrowful affair. I lost everything, except the clothes on my back, and but for the hospitality of the poor people among

whom I was thrown, I must have perished of hunger. One of the families kindly took care of me, until I could get to Genoa by means of a muleteer, who travelled in that direction, and was expected in about eight days afterwards. Recovered from the effects of the shipwreck, I spent the time very agreeably. The people inhabiting this part of the Ligurian coast were of Spanish descent; they were, in fact, the remains of a Spanish colony planted during an attempted conquest of the country in the sixteenth century. Like the Spaniards till this day, they danced in the open air, the girls cleverly using the castanets. One of the men played on the guitar, and an old woman beat time on a tambourine.'

'O how pretty that would be!' said Nancy. 'Were the girls nicely dressed?'

'Not at all,' answered the Great Miner. 'They were dressed very plainly, and even poorly. Not one of them had shoes or stockings; but as if to compensate for this, they decorated their hair very tastefully with wild-flowers.'

'Did any of them play on the guitar?'

'Yes; I was going to tell you,' continued Mr Badsley. 'Carina, the daughter of my host, played on the instrument beautifully; and, though not possessing a good ear for music, I learned

from her how to play some of the old Spanish airs. It was a pleasant enough life, but I fretted to get away, for I had important commercial affairs to look after at Genoa. At length, greatly to my relief, the muleteer arrived, and though a little sorry to leave the kind-hearted people who had sheltered me, I went on my journey across the mountains. I can never forget the parting scene. As the mules were ascending the steep road among the cliffs, I looked back, and far below were seen the family of my host watching the ascent, and the daughter Carina was singing, and playing one of those farewell airs, full of pathos, which are still not unknown on the picturesque coast of Liguria.'

The cashier, who had been a little put out by the musical exhibition, now returned to the matter of inquiry about the coal-pit; for on it several bank acquaintances were anxious to hear something definite; but this was a subject on which Mr Badsley could not be brought to enlarge. With much skill he dashed off into a disquisition on things in general, and the Treaty of Vienna in particular; his observations being delivered with a rapidity and eloquence which riveted the attention of the company.

The old lady and the members of her family had never had the good-fortune to listen to such a

variety of anecdotes, bon-mots, and accounts of places visited in different quarters of the globe. The Great Miner spoke as if he were intimately acquainted with the continent, from the shores of the Baltic to the Mediterranean. He talked entertainingly of the Hanse towns; of Hamburg, and the Alster with its flock of, white swans; of Amsterdam, and its water-ways full of shipping; of Rotterdam, with its shady walk on the Maas, known as the Boompjes, and above all its kermes.

‘You, no doubt, know,’ said the speaker, addressing the old lady, ‘what the kermes of Rotterdam are?’

‘Weel, I canna just say I do,’ was the reply. ‘All I ken about are the krames that were in the Auld Toun, a lang time ago. My marriage gloves were bought in ane of them. I have them yet, lying in a drawer, and they were nice lang gloves that gaed up to the elbow.’

‘All right, madam,’ continued the Great Miner, with a motion of his hand. ‘Kermes and krames mean the same tking. The Scotch, whom I esteem as a singularly wise people, have a number of words in common with the Dutch. I only wish you could have seen the kermes, or great fair, at Rotterdam, with long streets of wooden booths full of rich merchandise. Some of the booths, or

krames, as you would call them, are attended by female assistants from Friesland—beautiful women, with gold plates on their foreheads, and wearing fanciful gold ear-rings of enormous size. Did you ever hear how the keepers of these krames live during the fair, and take care of their money?’

All confessed a remarkable ignorance of these facts.

‘I will tell you,’ continued Badsley. ‘They live wholly in their booths, and sleep on their money. They make up a kind of bed below their counters, and stuff their pillows with dollars. Every night their pillows grow harder, till at last they sleep on nothing but hard cash. A most sensible, frugal people! I like them for their industry and their honesty. Honesty, madam, honesty; that is the first of all requisites.’

‘You may safely say that, sir,’ observed the widow, thrusting in a word. ‘I am aye tellin’ my sons that; and they’ll be a’ the better o’ hearing it frae ane that has seen sae much o’ the world.’

‘Well, I do not deny having seen something in the way of business; but all would have been of small importance but for the Treaty of Vienna. You have, of course, all heard of the Treaty of Vienna?’

There was again something like a general

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confession of ignorance. The question was beyond the range of family experience or conversation. It would have been very much more within the compass of their ideas, had the Great Miner asked the ladies where one could buy cheap silk dresses of last year's fashion, or where kid gloves could be very nicely cleaned and renovated at threepence a pair. As for the Treaty of Vienna, that was much too high a flight even for the cashier, who confessed to have but a dim knowledge of that historical event.

A moment's silence on the subject was broken by a modest observation from Bob Cameron, in a corner of the room. 'The Treaty of Vienna,' he said, 'was a political and commercial treaty effected at a congress of the great powers of Europe shortly after the peace of 1814.'

'You are a clever young man, sir,' observed the Great Miner. 'I see you have read history to some purpose. However, we shall not go into particulars. All I need say is, that the Treaty of Vienna has been the making of England. I speak not of the advantage to so humble an individual as myself. A wonderful piece of diplomacy that treaty. No one can speak of Lord Castlereagh without gratitude. I almost worship the memory of that great statesman. Yes, the Treaty of

Vienna opened the continental ports to British commerce, and upon that commerce all our grandeur rests. The fact is undeniable.'

No one in the unsophisticated assembly thought for an instant of denying or contesting the fact so affirmatively announced, and so the assertion was taken on trust. The harangue had, indeed, produced the desired effect—namely, a general stupefaction of ideas ; and there was a disinclination to introduce any topic of conversation with a personage so imposing in his language, and so far beyond ordinary comprehension. Dugald's intention of bringing on a conversation which would lead to his droll anecdote about the laddie who had been shamefully cheated out of his prize of a fat sheep by a mountebank on the Links, was entirely circumvented, because any attempt at fun in such a presence was felt to be hopeless.

Among the whole company, none was so greatly chagrined as Frank Lorimer. He was an admirer of Ailie. This, however, was a circumstance which he did not dare to disclose. His family had come through much tribulation ; and after a hard apprenticeship, he had just begun business in a small way ; and it might be years and years before he was entitled to make known the nature of his affections. Still, with this degree of

self-denial, he felt a pleasure in being near Ailie, and had all the evening been speculating on the possibility of a quadrille, in which he reckoned on having her for a partner. But no; it was not to be. How he hated the Great Miner! and did not hesitate to think that, for all his presumed wealth, he was an intolerable bore.

In a lull which followed the rhetorical outburst regarding the Treaty of Vienna and Lord Castle-reagh, the aged mistress of the mansion diffidently hinted something about staying to supper; but the Great Miner politely intimated that he did not eat supper. He had various transactions on hand which required serious attention; perhaps he might, on going home, have to sit up late to write letters; and besides, he had to think of his three girls. Talking of them, he ventured to hope 'that it was all settled as to their being taken in charge by the lady's very accomplished daughter, Miss Ailie: a fortnight hence, for mutual preparations, would do.'

'Everything is settled, sir,' said the mother. 'I'll see that Ailie gets ready, and goes at the appointed time. And we take it very kind o' you coming to see us. I hope you'll get home easily with the nine o'clock omnibus.'

With an interchange of compliments, and

general shaking of hands, Mr Badsley made his bow, and departed. There being no servant to light him along the dark passage to the door at the top of the stair, Bessie was not without an expedient to supply the deficiency. It consisted in turning her own arm into a candelabrum. Adroitly quitting the room before the Great Miner got into the passage, she seized a candlestick prepared for the purpose, and held it out at the door of a closet, while she herself, all but the hand, was unseen; by which happy device the passage was lighted, and the honour and respectability of the family were sustained.

‘Weel, what do ye think o’ him?’ inquired the mother, after there was a little composure.

‘A grand man that,’ said Henny.

‘A most genteel man,’ said Nancy. ‘Did you get a good look of his brooch, and his chain, and his ring? I’ll warrant that ring was worth at least twenty, I might say fifty, guineas.’

‘A very clever man,’ said Lucy. ‘His voice is splendid. That song of his was capital. I should like to get the words of it. His visit has been a great treat.’

‘Not at all a greedy man,’ said Bessie. ‘He might have staid to supper. But as he was asked, we’ll hae baith our meat and our mense.’

The jelly and the tippenny tarts will keep the house for twa-three days.'

'Altogether a man of wonderful information,' said Tom. 'What he mentioned about the Treaty of Vienna might have been put into a book. I must say he was a little disappointing about the coal-pit. However, I'll perhaps get that out of him yet.'

'And did ye no see how I took him up about the krames?' asked the mother. 'He was ower deep for me in the other things he spoke about, and sometimes I was a wee ravelled; but there's nae doubt he's a grand man, wi' a fine soundin' voice. He would mak a capital preacher, and might fill the largest kirk in Edinburgh. In going to be a governess to his daughters, Ailie will be a real lucky lassie.'

Dugald did not concur in the popular opinion about Mr Badsley. 'He may,' said he, 'be a great man, and a rich man, and a clever man, but I think he has ower mickle gift o' the gab; and I cannot say I liked the looks which he sometimes put on. We've had nae fun at a', and I am glad he is gone.'

Approving of Dugald's remarks, and seeing that now the coast was clear, Frank Lorimer proposed a quadrille, which was seconded by Lucy,

who said she would play on the piano, and if Bob Cameron had brought his flute in his pocket, there would be no want of music. Bob acknowledged having brought his flute, but stated that he knew only Scotch tunes. If they would dance reels, he would with all his heart play as long as they liked.

There was a general and joyous clapping of hands at Bob's suggestion. 'A reel, a reel!' was shouted, and all the young people sprung to their feet—Frank Lorimer fleeing to secure Ailie for the dance, before Johnny Hutchison could make up his mind to approach. Lucy, who was an accomplished and very hearty player of reels, took her seat at the piano; Bob standing bravely by her side, and accompanying her on his flute—a sweet-toned instrument; and Dugald, not to be idle, got hold of two large door-keys, which he skilfully jingled, to give the effect of a triangle. Frank Lorimer and Ailie were well matched in figure, looks, and alacrity of movement. They danced the reel of Tulloch with appropriate spirit, and untiring energy. Frank was specially happy, and felt as if he could have danced all night with Ailie for a partner.

In the midst of the fun, Mrs Gilroy went off quietly to bed; commissioning her eldest daughter, Henny, a discreet spinster, to preside over the

festivities, which came naturally to a conclusion in the supper which Bessie had considerably laid out in the parlour. The jelly and the 'tippenny tarts' were not destined to keep the house. Along with some other preparations, they were consumed with amazing celerity. Bob had blown himself, and Frank had danced himself, into an appetite ; and both set to with a zest which it did one good to look at. On parting, *Auld Lang Syne* was sung with hands joined all round—Frank standing next to Ailie—and every one declared they had never spent a more pleasant evening, the damp thrown over them at first by the Great Miner notwithstanding.

CHAPTER IV.

A YOUNG LADY'S OUTSET IN LIFE.

THE fortnight which succeeded the evening entertainment, was devoted to a variety of preparations for entering on the duties of a governess. Ailie brushed up her knowledge of early lessons in music and the French grammar. Her brother, the cashier, kindly gave her some fresh instruction in the simpler rules of arithmetic; and Lucy shewed her a new method of working crochet, which her pupils might be put to as a recreation. By the general recommendation of her sisters, she spent an hour or two daily on a school treatise on geography, and the history of England; taking care in particular to acquaint herself with some facts regarding the Treaty of Vienna, so that she might not appear deficient on that important matter in British history.

All the sisters, even to the youngest, felt so much interested in giving Ailie a creditable

appearance, that, in their kindness of heart, each contributed a little gift to her from their wardrobe, although they had but a limited stock of articles to draw upon. One presented a ribbon; and from others there were a pin-cushion, a stay-lace, a pair of gloves, a thimble, or some such trifle. The mother gave her a new morning dress of mousseline de laine, purchased, a great bargain, at the sale of a haberdasher's effects in George Street.

Presents equally gratifying came from a Miss Tolmie, a grand-aunt of the family, now considerably advanced in years, from whom there were entertained some not unreasonable expectations. This lady, who lived very retiredly in a suburban villa, and had the misfortune to be lame from rheumatism, had at times shewn a marked affection for Ailie. Hearing that she was about to leave home to be a governess, the old lady invited her to call. When she did so, the old lady took occasion to discuss various matters concerning the dreadful degeneracy in female costume. The wearing of long skirts and boots, then just coming into vogue, was to her an especial abomination.

'My dear,' said she in solemn admonition to Ailie, 'I hope that you will stand out against that foolish fashion of long skirts. In my young days, ladies were not ashamed to shew their feet

and ankles. They would have scorned the idea of wearing dresses to sweep the streets, and gather stour and dirt about their clothes. And, surely, the auld fashion was far mair tasteful in shape than that now-a-days. Can there be anything prettier to look at than a white stocking and a black shoe ?'

Ailie confessed that such were her own views, and hoped that the fashion of short skirts and neat shoes would soon come round again. The long dresses were certainly objectionable. They must have been invented for the purpose of concealing awkward and ungainly feet. She was quite ready to wear short skirts. All the Gilroys had neat feet, with a high instep, and none of them would be ashamed to dress according to the old style, as dear Aunt Tolmie suggested. Being much pleased with Ailie's good sense, as shewn in this very delicate matter, Miss Tolmie presented her with a tastefully made cloak with hood, of light gray cloth, lined with silk of the same colour, also a new silk bonnet, with bows of ribbon, and artificial flowers prettily wreathed in front. The whole being packed in two band-boxes, which were to be carried by a girl who acted as under-servant, Ailie expressed her gratitude to her grand-aunt, and taking leave, said she would never forget her kindness.

Ailie's report to her mother concerning Miss Tolmie's beneficence, and the exhibition of her gifts, caused no little rejoicing. This venerable relative had been thought eccentric and capricious, and had never shewn any great degree of cordiality. The Gilroys, however, were too proud to make court to her, and their intercourse was confined to occasional and ceremonious visits. Things were now apparently going to take a turn, at which all were correspondingly glad. Again Mrs Gilroy could not refrain from alluding to the happy omen of the white dove. The good of which it had been the forerunner was past description.

When Ailie was duly equipped for her removal to Portobello, there were sundry consultations as to whether she should proceed by the omnibus, or hire a cab for the journey. All considerations pointed to a cab as preferable. The luggage to be taken consisted of an old trunk covered with black leather, and ornamented with rows of brass nails. Although double the size that was wanted, it was pressed into the service as the only travelling-trunk available in the household. Then, there was a band-box containing the new silk bonnet, which, from its fragility, required careful handling. Next, there were Ailie's umbrella and

parasol, which had to be taken somehow, as indispensable for a young lady's outfit. Lastly, it was desirable that she should take her guitar, for the sake of amusement, if not for educational purposes.

Obviously, with so many things to carry—and laying aside notions of *éclat*—the cab, though six times the cost of the omnibus, was the proper means of conveyance. Such being determined on, and as the cab had to come back at anyrate, why should not the mother accompany her daughter, and see her set down at what was to be her new abode, and bring home an account of the proceedings on the occasion? The scheme was so reasonable, as to be at once agreed to; and the pang of quitting home 'to serve the frem'd,' was to Ailie more than half assuaged.

Yet, when the great day came for her to live among strangers, and the cab drew up at the foot of the common stair, and the old trunk and the band-box and guitar had been carried down, and the umbrella and parasol were on the table ready to be lifted, and the mother had put on her shawl, and properly tied on her bonnet; in short, when the moment for Ailie to depart at length had come, the most important till this time in her life—when, by inexorable fate, she had to quit the home of

her childhood, and begin an independent yet adventurous career—Ailie's heart became full of emotion, and a tear started into her eye.

'Keep up your spirits, Ailie,' said her sisters encouragingly. 'Good-bye, and you'll soon come back and see us, and we'll come now and then to see you in return. You know you are going to a grand situation, and no fears of all being to your mind. So again good-bye,' and there was a hearty shaking of hands with each sister in succession.

Ailie smiled through her tears at these expressions of kindness, and nodded a response as she lightly tripped down the stair followed by her mother. The sisters rushed to the window to see the cab move off, and to wave their handkerchiefs as long as it was within sight. When it disappeared down Queen Street, they all felt as if a shadow had come over their domestic system; and for the first time there was an unpleasant consciousness that the magnificent anticipations regarding Ailie's happiness might not possibly be realised under the roof of the Great Miner.

Let us, however, leave the sisters to their misgivings, and follow Ailie and her mother in their journey to Tower Street, Portobello. As the arrival of the governess had been expected, all was ready for her reception. Mr Badsley had

unfortunately been obliged to go out in consequence of business transactions, but had left orders with Jenny, the housemaid, to shew the young lady to her room, and make every suitable arrangement for dinner, for it would be late before his return.

Mrs Gilroy was not sorry that the Great Miner was out of the way. She had, as she observed in her maundering way, been wearying for a little quiet conversation with the decent-looking woman-servant who seemed to be in charge of the household ; and now there was a favourable opportunity for this very desirable indulgence, even though she should be put to the expense of paying as much as an additional sixpence for detaining the cab. She felt sure that her son, the cashier, would approve of this piece of generalship.

As so far favourable to her manoeuvre, Ailie, on arrival, went out for a walk with her three pupils, such having, as they said, been a suggestion of papa, and that the actual business of education was not to commence till the following day, when all were to go earnestly to work. Further, as if to render the scheme practicable, Jenny politely invited the old lady to rest herself a little in the parlour before returning. Nor was Jenny disinclined to a little gossip, though disposed to be

cautious with a stranger. She accordingly, after seeing Mrs Gilroy seated, hung about the room, first whisking with a cloth to clear away some alleged dust, and then standing still with her hand resting on the back of a chair, ready to give and take in the way of talk.

‘I am real glad,’ said the lady, introducing matters; ‘I am real glad that my daughter will have such a nice respectable woman in the house with her. I fancy you’ll hae been lang in the place?’

‘Na, not sae lang as ye wad think. I’m an Edinburgh woman, and cam here only at Martin-mas twalmonth. This is the first time I served away frae the toun. I dinna tak very weel wi’ the country, although it’s no a bad place this.’

‘I suppose ye’ve had a guid deal o’ experience o’ places, Jenny? and yet I shouldna say that, either, for ye’re still a young woman.’

‘Weel, as for that,’ responded Jenny, giving at the same time another whisk to the table, and resuming her post, ‘ye see, mem, I began when I was only a wee bit lassie. My faither was never very strong. For a while he carried about milk for a dairy, but he took a rack in the back, which laid him off his work, and at last he died o’ a suttin-doon cauld. After that my mother tried to

mak a fend by keepin' a mangle in Lady Lawson's Wynd. 'I didna like to leave her, but what could I do? By guid luck, I got a situation at the *Harrow* Inn, in the Candlemaker Row—a great house for carriers, as ye maybe ken. It was a guid place, and frae ae thing to another I raise to be chief servant, and what wi' my wages and getting bits o' presents frae customers, I saved a guid deal o' siller; and it's a pity I ever left the *Harrow*.'

'But what made you leave it, since ye were sae weel off?'

'Ay, ye may speer that,' answered Jenny. 'Maist folk dinna ken when they're weel off. It was the siller that playèd the mischief. If I hadna had a bawbee, but spent a' my wages and my savings on braws and nonsense, I might have been in the *Harrow* yet.'

'How was that, Jenny?'

'What could it be but the lads? Ane o' them, reason or nane, wad hae me. I, like a fule, married him. What he wanted was the siller. I had three-and-twenty pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence in my kist. He took every farthing o't to begin a business, as he said. A bonny-like business it was to me. The hale o't was barkin' and fleecin' in less than six weeks. He was himsel'

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never to ca' sober. And at last, when a' was gane, off he set ae Monday mornin', and I have never seen or heard o' him frae that day to this.'

'That's an awfu' story, Jenny. What do ye think cam o' him?'

'Me! I canna tell. They said he gaed off to America. He may by this time be shot, or hanged, or drowned, or blawn up, for onything I ken. My only wish is, never to see or hear onything mair about him.'

'And did you lose everything?'

'That I did. I was roupit out o' house and hauld, wi' searcely a gown on my back, or a pair o' shoon on my feet. If it hadna been for my auld mistress in the *Harrow*, I micht hae begged the streets. She got me this situation, and I can tell you, mem, I am very thankful to hae a bed to lie on, and to lead a quiet life. They'll be clever that catch me a second time wi' their palavers.'

'Then, it is an easy place, I see you have got, Jenny; the maister o' the house does not gie ye much trouble. Very little company, I suppose?'

'Nae company at a'. The maister is an extraordinar quiet man. He's a great deal away on business which I ken naething about. When at

hame, he reads and looks ower his papers, and speaks to the girls, or gies bits o' orders about the house. I have seen him, however, get into awfu' tirrievies when he's put about or angered wi' onything that has happened.'

'What kirk does he gang to, Jenny?'

'I canna just say he gangs to ony kirk in particular; but the lasses attend the chapel, and are quiet, weel-meanin' girls.'

'Now, Jenny, ye see, it's time I was away. I ken ye'll be kind to my daughter. But, Jenny, before I gang, I wad like to ken your full name, or what ye're generally ca'd.'

'I've just the same name I aye had—Jenny Barry. Some ca' me Mrs Barry, but that I care naething about, and I'm quite weel pleased to be plain Jenny. Sae guid-day to ye, mem.'

The interview being thus brought to a termination, the lady returned to town, considerably at her ease respecting Ailie's outset in life as a governess. On getting home, she did not fail to expatiate on the orderly arrangements which prevailed in the household of the Great Miner. It is true, there was a want of a distinct understanding as to what particular kirk he belonged to, which was not so satisfactory as could be wished. On the other hand, as the three girls, his daughters, went at

least to the Episcopal chapel, that was better than nothing ; and gave a sort of assurance that Ailie had not been resigned into the hands of absolute heathens. Besides, there was this great comfort : Ailie had good principles, and, in a religious point of view, there was no fear of her.

CHAPTER V.

AILIE AS A GOVERNESS—THE BALCHRISTIES.

A ILIE'S career as a governess gave promise of success. The course of instruction of her three pupils was left to her own judgment. The eldest was twelve years of age, and the youngest nine. Their education had latterly been so much neglected, that Ailie's duties were chiefly confined to teaching the elementary branches, for which she was thoroughly qualified. She likewise endeavoured to inculcate tasteful and lady-like habits, and spoke to the girls on a variety of moral and religious obligations, of which they seemed to have but an imperfect conception. She therefore became what might very properly have been deemed a treasure in the house. And such was her gentle and affectionate manner towards her pupils, that, though disposed to be reserved, if not a little sullen, they gave her their

confidence, and felt happy in being placed under her charge. As if leaving nothing undone to conciliate them, and win their young hearts, she made some sacrifice of her ordinary habits and feelings, by escorting them to the chapel they had been in the custom of attending—a circumstance not without the anticipated good effect.

Performing these useful services, and in all respects simple and unobtrusive, Ailie could scarcely fail to insure the favourable opinion of the Great Miner. Being frequently absent for several days at a time, he could not do less than leave the household very much to her management. This was slightly trenching on the prerogative of Jenny Barry ; but Mr Badsley's edicts were too imperious to be matter of contest, and Jenny had too keen a recollection of what she had undergone, to imperil her present comforts by making any objections to Ailie's assumption of dominion. After all, Jenny's powers were barely encroached upon ; for Ailie, with consummate tact, made a point of seeming to consult her, and profit by her enlarged experience. Jenny, accordingly, ceased to have any jealousy of Ailie as a directress, and soon became so attached to her as to be a willing auxiliary in domestic arrangements. To the neighbours, Jenny gave the highest character to the

'young leddy that had come to be the governess to the three girls.' And as Ailie's conduct in walking out with her pupils was always discreet, and as her dress was always neat and tasteful, she gained the silent esteem of those who were pleased to make her the subject of remark.

Buoyed up by her sense of duty, she did not repine at the comparatively dull routine to which she was condemned. There were no pleasant evening parties to break the general monotony. No longer did she share in the family entertainment at Dugald's play of the soo. Life went on evenly and unvaryingly. No old acquaintances dropped in. With those about her there was nothing like the exhilarating conversation she had been accustomed to. But placid in temperament, and resolute in fulfilling her obligations, we repeat that Ailie did not yield to despondency, nor did she fret at being placed in a dependent position. And can we imagine, for one in her situation, anything more truly admirable than her uncomplaining endurance and resolution to do that which had been assigned to her in the line of an honourable and praiseworthy duty?

The position of a governess is trying. Sometimes it may be irritating. But it is undertaken

voluntarily : is in most cases a necessity, to secure the means of existence : consequently, there must be sacrifices of feeling, to which, from considerations of duty, it is generally best to submit. We can entertain nothing but contempt for those who act haughtily or overbearingly towards young women who are qualified, by mental culture, to be their equals ; but, on the other hand, we do not the less see that among governesses there may be assumptions of dignity wholly out of place, and a querulousness ridiculously inconsistent with the position occupied.

Ailie did not go into the philosophy of the thing. She acted from a simple desire to fulfil her duties ; and the performance of duty is always blissful in communicating happiness. It was so far favourable, that she had no lady over her whose humours required to be consulted. It was likewise a comfort that, owing to the convenient and inexpensive transit by the omnibus, she was able to make frequent visits to, and to be visited by, her mother and sisters. On these occasions, she prudently said little of the domestic affairs of the establishment ; but, in general terms, expressed herself satisfied with the situation into which she had been launched. She admitted that her position was a little lonely, but not at all

uncomfortable. It would do very well. She was kindly and considerately treated.

Ailie's only acquaintances in Portobello were Mrs Pringle and her daughter Grace, who was about her own age. As a widow with this only child, Mrs Pringle lived in a comparatively retired manner in Melville Street, a few doors from the church. Her deceased husband, who had been a captain in the East India Company's service, had a sister, Mrs Balchristie, who was at this time one of the leaders of fashion in Edinburgh. The style of living, and range of thought, of this lady were so different from all that Mrs Pringle and her daughter were accustomed to, that there was little intercourse between the families. One house was quiet and decorous—the inmates engaged in the simple duties of life, as if desirous to occupy themselves like rational and accountable beings. The other was all racket, fuss, and flurry—late breakfasts, fashionable luncheons, kettledrums, crowded dinner and supper parties, consequent on there being four Misses Balchristie to be brought out one after the other, exhibited at balls, and introduced wherever there was a chance of catching an eligible.

In this bustling household, Balchristie, *père*, counted for very little. He had been in the

army, and acquitted himself with much gallantry during the war in the Peninsula. At the third and most successful storming of Badajos, he led a forlorn-hope, for which he afterwards received the thanks of the Duke of Wellington, who on the spot raised him to the rank of major, and presented him with the sword of the French commander, General Philippon, who was taken prisoner. That was the memorable event of Balchristie's life. He brought home the sword, which he treasured with the deepest veneration. Now, retired on his laurels, Major Balchristie spent his time mostly at the United Service Club, and left the administration of home affairs to his wife, in which department, according to her own belief, she was well qualified to shine, considering her high aims in trying to get good matches for her daughters. For this she lived, and in reality thought of nothing else.

In her youth, Mrs Balchristie had been pretty. She also had a good figure; and being connected with the territorial gentry, she laid herself out for securing some man of fortune, perhaps one with a title. Strangely enough, she had sold herself cheap. In preference to some others, she accepted Balchristie, who was reputedly wealthy. It was rumoured that, when serving with the army in

Spain, he had on an occasion of great emergency been detached to act with the baggage and commissariat department, and realised large sums of money as Bat-money. The rumour was without foundation, so far as the money was concerned. It was discovered, when too late, that he had only his pension and the produce of a limited patrimony. There was a downcome. However, Mrs Balchristie contrived to gain a footing among those classes who, if not belonging to the upper ten thousand, hang parasitically and contentedly on their skirts. In this choice circle, she left no stone unturned, and scrupled at no sort of artifice to get her daughters established in positions such as that to which she herself had once hoped to attain.

It was a desperate and constant struggle. Although she was far from being destitute of good abilities, and possessed much amiability of character, all was subordinated to this single object. Like that strong maternal affection instinctively shewn by the lower animals for their young, Mrs Balchristie's solicitude about her daughters was an overpowering infatuation. It led her to be wholly indifferent to her husband, whom she treated as a cipher; and, by both precept and example, she trained up her girls with notions alike perverted and absurd.

When one day calling on Mrs Pringle and her daughter, Ailie happened to meet Mrs Balchristie. She had come for the purpose of asking Grace to visit her cousin Augusta, who was stated to be in a poor state of health, and needed a little cheering up. There was to be a kettledrum on Thursday at four, and it would be very pleasant if Miss Pringle would come in time to be present. There were to be some very nice people at the party. Among others, Lady Duntaskin; Major Drivel, and Captains Strengler, Rook, and Drappock of the Royals; the Hon. Captain Macwham of the Lancers, and his lady; Dunskey, younger of Dunskey, and his Ma; Jack Pickerton, and his sister, one of the Misses Pickerton; also Miss Ogleheimer, a daughter of a German baron, who was about to return home after having completed her English education—all very good people.

Mrs Pringle could not answer for Grace, who was unfortunately out. She had gone to visit a poor family in the lane near the brick-work, that was in great distress. The husband had just died of a severe injury; his wife that very morning had borne twins; and three children were down with the measles.

‘What a dreadful complication of miseries!’ said Mrs Balchristie.

‘Yes,’ replied Mrs Pringle, ‘it is indeed. The case is deplorable, and Grace having heard of it from the doctor, has gone to offer some little advice and assistance. However, here she comes. You can speak to her about her cousin Augusta.’

After a little demur, Miss Pringle accepted the invitation, but could not exactly promise to stay for the kettledrum. So far satisfied, Mrs Balchristie, with a suavity of which she was mistress, offered a similar invitation to Ailie.

‘Miss Gilroy,’ she said, ‘you are already acquainted with Augusta, and I am sure that she would greatly prize a visit from you in her present condition. And as I hope that you will stay to the kettledrum, perhaps you would kindly bring your guitar.’

Ailie had not the slightest desire to be an intimate of the Balchristies, with whom she could not consider herself to be an equal. But putting aside her feelings, and recollecting that, after all, she had formerly experienced some kindness from Mrs Balchristie, she consented to accompany Miss Pringle. Both would come by the three o’clock omnibus on Thursday.

It will seem strange how Ailie should in the slightest degree have ever been known to Mrs

Balchristie or her family. A few words of explanation will suffice.

About twelve months previously, she had been employed to teach Augusta to play on the guitar. An anxiety to acquire this branch of knowledge was not prompted purely by a love of music. There was a talk of a fancy ball, with a species of dramatic *tableaux vivants*, in the Assembly Rooms, under the patronage of the officers of the garrison, at which Augusta resolved to make her appearance in a striking character and attitude. Her ambition was to perform the part of the beautiful and fascinating Diana of Poitiers, Duchesse de Valentinois, at the court of Francis I. early in the sixteenth century. She was to be dressed in the costume of the French court at the period, and to appear as if interceding with the king, by her blandishments and her music, for the life of her father. It was a pretty idea, and required a pretty and accomplished woman for its execution.

Augusta had a fair share of good looks. She possessed handsome features, with hazel eyes full of expression, and she had a charmingly fair complexion. At the winter assemblies, she was ordinarily reckoned to be that envied being, the belle of the ball. For the part she had undertaken as Diana of Poitiers, it was essential she

should be something more than a belle. She required to be able to sing a French *chanson*, and to accompany it with the guitar. Ailie's professional skill had accordingly to be called into requisition. Augusta proved an apt pupil. In about two months the *chanson* could be sung, and the instrument handled to a tolerable degree of perfection.

At the fancy ball, the part of the gay François Premier was to be sustained by Major Drivel of the Royals. According to the Balchristian standard, Drivel was every inch an eligible. He was brother and heir-presumptive of Sir Duncan Drivel of Glendrive, Baronet, in Ross-shire, and had an excellent territorial connection. Except that he could look the character, through such able assistance as might be imparted by the tailor and hairdresser, he was rather deficient intellectually, besides being noted for his extravagance and bibulous propensities. Still he was an eligible. Hounded on by her mother, who was dying to get her daughters introduced to the Drivel connection, Augusta made a dead set at him from the moment he had come with his regiment to the castle. Invited by the Balchristies, Major Drivel found their mansion to be a mighty pleasant lounge. It was a

house with a well-established character for its good eating and drinking. A round of cold beef usually stood on the side-board, and chops, pale ale, and nips of brandy were always at command. The hot luncheons were superb. The champagne capital.

As adding to the attractions of the establishment, there was never the least trouble from old Balchristie. He was seldom seen. Sometimes he was at the club, sometimes he was up-stairs unwell. No one thought of asking about him. At times, however, his wife and daughters dreaded a visitation from him at luncheon, when they imagined he would be much better out of the way. On such occasions, they had a ready means of securing his absence. They set him to scour his sword—that sword of General Philippon, which he had received from the Duke of Wellington, and was prized by him beyond all earthly possessions.

There was something fine in the old fellow's devotion to his sword. It vividly reminded him of that terrible escalade amidst fire and shot, when he gained a footing on the wall with a few followers, who cut down all before them. It was a memento of a complimentary speech from Field-Marshal the Commander-in-chief, and of his

promotion to a majority. Then, to think that it was the very sword which Bonaparte had presented to Philippon, and which was now his by gift from the Duke of Wellington. No wonder he treasured and hung in fond admiration over the weapon. Often he indulged himself in tenderly wiping and burnishing the highly ornamented scabbard, and seeing that the sword was free from speck or rust; after performing which pleasurable duty, he hung it carefully up at a place prepared for it in his dressing-room.

Considering the reverential attachment of old Balchristie for his sword, few will admire the trick which was performed to get him out of the way on the occasion of any specially grand luncheon, at which his quiet solemnity would have been out of place. The manœuvre was this. When watering some flowers in a stand near the window, one or other of the daughters, with the approval of the mother, stealthily spilt some water on the sword, which, from the temper of the metal, was speedily disfigured by specks of rust. Intelligence of this misfortune sent the poor man half-frantic to his room, where he kept lovingly scouring and polishing the weapon for hours, and from which nothing could have withdrawn him short of burning down the house.

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All the hot luncheons, and all the dry champagne that could be lavished on Major Drivel, failed to elicit a declaration. His heart seemed as impervious as the hide of the rhinoceros. However, there was still hope. It was confidently believed that Augusta's performance of *Diana of Poitiers* would do the business. When the time came, the part was acted to admiration. The white satin dress, the rich lace, the brilliant necklace and bracelets, the decorated hair crowned with ostrich feathers, the complexion delicately heightened by cosmetics, the finely sung chanson, and the dexterous fingering of the guitar, were all noted with approbation. But for the object in view they were wholly unavailing. All Ailie's instructions were as good as thrown away. To bring himself up to the part of *François Premier*, Drivel had taken a little too much. At the finest part of the scene, when *Diana* came out with a burst of pathos, he sat stupidly staring, as if looking into vacuity. This awkward and unforeseen result was, of course, a sore disappointment to the young lady.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INTERESTING INVALID—MUFFISM.

IT was at this juncture that Miss Pringle and Ailie were invited to visit the Balchristies, to see Augusta, and, if possible, stay to the kettledrum. This afternoon refecton between luncheon and dinner, consisting of a slight affair of tea, had then been only introduced into Edinburgh. It was a novelty in fashionable life, but at once became popular, as affording a chance for unceremoniously meeting with friends, along with some scope for flirtation. Mrs Balchristie's kettledrums were every Thursday at four, and usually well attended, whether with or without invitation.

In a handsomely fitted-up back drawing-room, a little *passé* in point of style, and kept at a high degree of temperature, Ailie and Miss Pringle found Augusta Balchristie stretched on a sofa, a poor invalid. Pale and languid, she wore a morning

dress of white muslin, with a necklace and bracelets of pink coral. In her neatly braided hair was twisted a rose-bud, and over her feet was loosely thrown a light Shetland shawl. By her side, on a small table, were a few light sponge biscuits, and a bunch of grapes. Her appetite, it was stated, was miserable. She could not eat. All she could take now and then was a morsel of the biscuit, or one or two grapes. Ailie was shocked. Her old pupil shook her by the hand, and said it was a comfort to see her.

‘I am very, very sorry to see you so poorly,’ said the simple-minded Ailie. ‘Can nothing be done? May I ask what is the nature of your complaint?’

‘My complaint,’ replied Augusta feebly, ‘is not easily defined. It is a kind of constitutional weakness produced by our northern climate. The doctors say that if I were to go to some far southern clime, I should soon recover, and be as strong as possible. What I want is warmth. I could endure any amount of heat.’

‘Very extraordinary,’ said Ailie, taking one of Augusta’s hands, and holding it between hers.

Meanwhile, Miss Pringle, after taking a glance at Augusta, passed into the front drawing-room to have a little conversation with Miss Julia

Balchristie, a young lady who aspired to be a confidant and directress of her sisters.

‘What in all the world is the matter with Augusta?’ she inquired. ‘This illness seems a very sudden affair. I saw her lately, to all appearance, quite well, and I almost suspect there is some sort of *ruse* in the matter.’

‘Well, I may tell you privately,’ replied Julia. ‘Augusta is pining. The Royals have received orders to prepare for going to India.’

‘What has that to do with Augusta? I wish you would be explicit. I hate mysteries.’

‘Cannot you see that Augusta is trying to influence Major Drivel to take her to India, such being a climate that will suit her? He is daily made aware that what she wants is a warm climate; and if he has any inclination at all to make an offer, now is his time. I am not without hopes that the scheme may answer. At the kettledrum to-day, the major will have another sight of Augusta, and of learning what she requires in the way of heat.’

‘O Julia, how can you talk in that manner?’ said Miss Pringle. ‘I am amazed at such a miserable device to get a husband: and such a husband! Major Drivel may be well connected; but from all I can learn, he is a fool, a sot, and

a profligate—a man to be shunned rather than encouraged.'

Julia drew herself up with an air of offended dignity, and observed very imposingly: 'In marriage, the man is a secondary consideration in the bargain. The real circumstances worth regarding are his standing in society, his connections, and what is the circle to which he can introduce you. As for myself, I would rather marry a scamp than a muff.'

'Pray, what is a muff?' asked Grace.

'A muff is any low fellow connected, however remotely, with business; and who talks about anything but balls, and reviews, and horse-races, and driving, and shooting, and wines, and cookery, and jewelry, and fine dresses, and perfumery, and all that. I am determined I shall never marry a muff.'

'Would a man be a muff,' inquired Miss Pringle, 'if he were to speak on literature, or politics, or pictures, or religious topics, or any matter of general intelligence?'

'Certainly,' answered Julia; 'any species of what you call intelligence is only vulgarity. Every man presuming to be intelligent, or who speaks from professional knowledge, is a muff, a person to be shunned.'

Julia accompanied her exposition with a toss of the head, which was as much as to say: 'I will not condescend to speak any more on the subject to one so hopelessly benighted as not to hold a muff in contempt.'

The views of this young lady may seem to many a little *outré*. All we can say is, that they exist, and are matter of cultivation. The sentiments of Julia Balchristie do not spring from the rack of literary invention, but are recorded from actual utterances. Nor are they anyway singular. The Balchristies are only a type of that class of young ladies who, under the fostering care of match-making mothers deranged with notions of caste, hold in abhorrence all but what can be ranked under the category of idleness and frivolity, or, it may be, downright deceit and prodigality. 'I would rather marry a scamp than a muff!' Pleasant remark that, from the mouth of a young lady aspiring, with all her perverted fancies, to maintain a respectable position in society!

At the moment that Julia was expressing her horror of muffs, Ailie was bidding good-bye to Augusta, under an apprehension that she would never see her more; and immediately afterwards made her appearance in the front drawing-room.

Julia was barely civil to Ailie, and wondered

how her mother, even with the hope of getting an air on the guitar, should have asked to the house any one so signally inferior in position. Apparently desirous of getting her out of the way, she suggested that her cousin and Miss Gilroy might perhaps be amused by visiting papa in his room, and seeing his operations on his favourite sword, which had that morning met with an accident. The hint was willingly taken, for Grace would rather have seen Major Balchristie than any one else; and the two young ladies quitted the drawing-room, by which means Miss Julia was left a clear field to receive the expected guests.

They found the old soldier, with his gray head and still grayer moustache, bent in solicitude over the dear sword, which had been so wilfully defaced to keep him from the kettledrum. As he went on scouring, and rubbing, and polishing, softly whistling the while, out of pure earnestness, he could only in his polite manner say that he was glad to see his niece with her young friend, of whose musical acquirements he had a pleasing recollection. He hoped they would find some amusement in the little party below. As for himself, he felt that his military character was so much at stake, that, unfortunately, he could not leave his sword until the last speck of tarnish had disappeared;

and it might be night before he was able to attend to any meals, or get down-stairs.

Not to interrupt him in these assiduous labours, his two visitors in a short time descended to the drawing-room, now beginning to be filled with company, including the hostess, who seemed busily talking with the Hon. Captain Macwham. She courteously arose to greet the young ladies; but before she could do so, the door burst open, and in poured Major Drivel with Captains Drappock and Rook, in a state of boisterous merriment.

‘Something has vastly amused you,’ said Mrs Balchristie to the major. ‘We are all longing to hear what it is.’

‘The drag, the drag! that’s what it is,’ answered the major. ‘It was the finest thing ever you saw in your life. And so saying he burst into a fresh guffaw.

‘It would be interesting to know what drag you mean,’ said the Hon. Captain Macwham.

‘Why, the drag, to be sure,’ responded the major, ‘which we got to drive to the pigeon-shooting at Colinton. At a part of the road, the horse jibbed, and ran back into the bank, overturning the machine, and throwing us all out. A most charming adventure; and the finest thing of the whole is that Strengler was pitched into a hillock

of mud. Wasn't that capital? I would not for a hundred guineas have lost the sight of him as he lay sprawling on the side of the road.' And again there was a burst of merriment.

With the addition of several ladies, the kettle-drum was now in full force. Jack Pickerton did not make his appearance. His sister, however, presented herself, and opened the musical part of the entertainment by executing a piece from the *Semiramide* of Rossini, which had not been long before the world. Ailie's turn to play came next, and she performed the music of the French chanson which she had taught Augusta—perhaps not suggestive of pleasing reflections to the invalid who lay on the sofa within hearing, and was at this moment waited on by her mother and Major Drivel.

Notwithstanding his sottishness and his folly, the major had some gentlemanly habits and feelings. He accordingly, at the little interview, spoke as if sorry for the condition of the invalid. 'We are all sorry, Miss Augusta,' he said, 'to see you laid up in this way. I hope you'll soon be able to be out.'

'Much obliged, major, for your good wishes; but I can see no prospect of going out in this unfortunate climate of ours. It is much too cold for me. What I require, as I think mamma has

told you, is great warmth. Some persons have recommended Sierra Leone, on the coast of Africa; but I could not live in that pestilential region. What would best suit my constitution would be the East or West Indies—the East, probably, the most answerable. But it is of no use speaking about it. I suppose I must try to remain at home; and not only keep up good fires, but have the seams of the windows closed. As I may not see you again, Major Drivel, please to accept this rose, and good-bye. I hope you will have a pleasant voyage.'

So saying, Augusta, who had taken the rosebud from her hair, presented it gracefully to the major, who put it in his button-hole. What was the view he adopted of the case never properly transpired, nor is any one aware if he understood that the presentation of a rose by a young lady is equivalent to saying that she is open to an offer. He, at least, courteously shook hands with Augusta, and retreated to the drawing-room, where the party were on the point of dispersing; for a kettledrum is limited to a single hour.

The silly observations made by several of the guests did not inspire pleasing emotions in Grace, who had not been accustomed to hear a conversation on nothing but subjects of the most frivolous

description. The open and paltry flirtation between the military officers and the young ladies was a further shock to her sense of delicacy—the whole affair being apparently contrived for no other end than husband-hunting, and that in a manner as scandalous as it was unavailing. From all she had heard, however, Grace was not greatly surprised that her aunt and cousins cultivated the society of a class of persons destitute of any rational purpose, and whose object, to all appearance, was to treat life as little better than a joke. Whispering to Ailie that she desired to go, the two, after some common-place compliments, quietly escaped from the apartment. Immediately afterwards they quitted the house; a servant escorting them and carrying the guitar to the nearest cab, by which they returned to Portobello.

It does not pertain to us to narrate a history of Augusta Balchristie's final attempt to catch the illustrious Drivel, further than to say that the stratagem of the illness failed as completely as the representation of Diana of Poitiers. Immediately on the Royals departing for India, the invalid, who stood so much in need of warmth, experienced a rapid recovery, and was soon seen, though in pretty cold weather, with her wonted buoyancy in Princes Street.

Possibly, Augusta lived to congratulate herself on a fortunate escape. Major Drivel never got to India at all. He was arrested for debt, and ignominiously forced to sell out. To add to his misfortunes, his elder brother, Sir Duncan, had a son and heir, so as to completely cut him off from his expected inheritance. The last time he was heard of, he was honestly earning his bread as a cattle-driver in Australia. He had fallen, or, we might more correctly say, he had risen, to the position of—a muff.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW AND UNEXPECTED INCIDENTS.

AFTER Ailie's return from the Balchristies, life went on in its wonted dull routine. Without saying anything about it, Ailie could not help feeling that there was something very odd in the circumstance of the Great Miner having no visitors such as might have been expected to call on a man of so much wealth and importance. She had now been a resident in the house for the space of about four months, and during all that period the only person who had called on Mr Badsley was Mr Pickerton ; the gentleman who, spoken of as Jack Pickerton, was expected to figure at Mrs Balchristie's kettledrum. When he called, he staid only a few minutes, and Ailie saw nothing more of him than his back as he quitted the dwelling.

Though a little surprising, this singular absence

of visitors did not make any serious impression on Ailie, nor did she speak of it as a thing of any consequence. From a sense of delicacy, she was silent to her mother and sisters regarding a matter which had begun to give her a degree of uneasiness. This was the attentions, growing in warmth, that were paid to her by her employer. His behaviour towards her had latterly, as she thought, become more than simply polite. On returning home after an absence of two or three days, he spoke of the delight of seeing her looking so well. And more than once he made her a present in token of his respect, which, but for giving offence, she would have gladly refused.

Ailie was a little annoyed at these unexpected and undesired demonstrations. The Great Miner was not a man to excite tender emotions. He was, no doubt, every way a presentable person—a man with a presence. He would have filled the office of a chief magistrate with uncommon dignity. There was a style about him that was very impressive. Yet there was also a something about him that you could not well explain. He often appeared meditative and suspicious. He was not communicative to any intelligible purpose. Except that he was a widower with three children, he was an isolated being. Apparently wealthy, he was a

stranger, with few or no intimate friends—grand to look at with his fine clothes, his brooch, his chain, his ring, and his swagger, and that was all.

Modesty was not one of the characteristics of the Great Miner. Little by little, judiciously feeling his way, he hinted at the great satisfaction he would have, if these three poor girls of his could possibly have the benefit of a mother's authority and superintendence. If anything occurred to him, they were no doubt well provided for. Whatever else might fall to their lot, they would possess his principal mine in Northumberland, worth, to them, share and share alike, twelve thousand a year. What was to be done as regards his other mines, and his miscellaneous property at home and abroad, was still under consideration. He often had a notion of leaving considerable sums to public charities. The possession of money on a large scale was, to say the least of it, very embarrassing. What is all the wealth of the world without the finer affections? A mother's tenderness was of the most exalted kind. And, for his part, where there was a high-souled moral principle, he believed it was quite possible for a step-mother to act as nobly as any real mother could do. He had known some wonderful, very wonderful,

cases of this kind. What the world wants is faith—faith in the exalted character of the affections. He was a man of business. Commerce had been his hobby, perhaps too engrossingly. He wished he had thought more of topics of a momentous nature; and he trusted there was still time left him for cultivating the higher faculties and emotions.

Harangues of this kind, delivered with persuasive eloquence, set Ailie thinking. Gentle, trustful, unsuspecting, she would have been less than woman had she not perceived what Mr Badsley was driving at. But not endowed with a very vigorous understanding, and possessing a singular easiness of disposition, she passed everything off with a smile or a laugh. At times she was a little at a loss in knowing what to say, but taking no serious thought, and in some degree overawed by the Great Miner's grand looks and manner, she allowed matters to drift on without special regard to the consequences. It is hard to say whether Ailie, when alone, did not in the depths of her own consciousness try to reconcile herself to the idea of accepting Mr Badsley, if he made her an offer. He was not the husband she would have liked. But, on the other hand, she had before her a life of indefinite struggle, and he was at all

events one who would protect her, and to whom, woman-like, she could cling. We may wrong her by making such suppositions; for Ailie was not the least sordid. It is only reasonable to imagine that, in her innocence and inexperience, she may have taken a more lenient view of the vague harangues addressed to her, or rather delivered in her hearing, than, with a proper knowledge of the world, she could or would have done. In short, as we say, she did nothing, but let things take their course.

On the whole, Ailie saw little of this mysterious man, although living in the same house with him. When at home, he kept his own room, engaged in deep speculations, poring over papers, and perusing books of reference of various kinds. One of his peculiar branches of study was street directories, of which he possessed a voluminous collection, referring to the principal cities in Great Britain and the continent of Europe. His researches in this department of literature were thought to be rather odd; but as he was odd in many ways, this particular eccentricity was not seriously thought of. When it pleased his fancy, he would come into the general sitting-room for half an hour or so in the evening, professedly to hear Ailie's report concerning the children. It was at such times that,

seated in an easy-chair, with his head thrown back and his eyes turned to the ceiling, he was apt to indulge in his long and not very intelligible harangues ; Ailie all the while occupied with sewing, knitting, or some other kind of lady's work, and never answering except in monosyllables, or in a faint nod or smile.

One evening, Mr Badsley's dissertation fell on family history. He described himself as being a cadet of an ancient family of note in Worcestershire, which dated from long before the Conquest. A near relative now occupied the family inheritance, a splendid estate, situated in the parish of Badsley-cum-Bampton ; but there were circumstances which rendered it likely that the property might come into his possession. If such happened to be the case, he had a great mind to relinquish his present industrial career, and retire to the old manor-house, which had been inhabited by his ancestors for centuries. The only thing which shook him in this resolution was, that he was a widower without an adequate companion. Life would be too dull. He did not think that, after a bustling career, he could endure the solitude of the manor-house.

Having cleared the way, as he imagined, by these explanations regarding the dignity of the

Badsley family in the parish of Badsley-cum-Bampton, in Worcestershire; and of the possibility of his residing in the old manor-house, if he could find a wife to his mind, the Great Miner left matters to mature for a day or two, not doubting that Ailie, though far from selfish or acute, would lay one thing to another, and prepare herself for what was to be his next move in the game.

Ailie would rather that he never resumed the topic. She had thought and thought over the matter, and did not feel in her own bosom that response which could satisfy the Great Miner. Sometimes her recollections glanced at Frank Lorimer. She remembered how nicely he danced, how pleasant he was as a companion, how retiring he was, how much he was liked by her family. But then Frank had never shewn that marked degree of preference which encouraged her to look on him with the eyes of affection. Frank was poor; and no one could tell if, with all his industry, he would ever be in a position to marry. It was ridiculous for her to think of him at all. Still, it was interesting to remember the touching way in which he sung *O Poortith Could!* There was a thrilling tenderness in his voice when he came to the refrain:

‘Oh, why should Fate sic pleasure have,
Life’s dearest bands untwining;
Or why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on Fortune’s shining?’

She recollected that in singing the lines, he seemed to steal a sidelong glance at her, as if saying that, until Fortune was pleased to shine on him, he must keep silent as to his feelings. It was so modest of him! Yes, he was a capital fellow, Frank; there was no doubt about that. But for years and years he might be struggling on in business, living in a very poor way in a small back-room, and there did not seem any great chance of his ever paying his addresses to her. It was absurd and improper to think of him.

At the same time, in relinquishing hopes of Frank—poor Frank!—whom she never would cease to regard in the friendliest possible spirit, why should she be in a hurry to marry any one? Now that she thought of it, she had years ago received a valentine, and could not tell from whom it came. It might have been from some excellent young man worth loving and marrying, and who was only biding his time to declare himself. She wondered if she had still the valentine. If it was preserved, it must be tied up in a bundle of notes and other papers in her trunk. And it might be

as well she should look at it again, and see if anything could be made of it.

So speculating, Ailie proceeded to look for the valentine, which she well knew was in her possession, for she had always guarded it from loss or injury. Accordingly, she had no difficulty in finding it, wrapped up among a variety of notes inviting her to evening parties, along with invitations to picnics at the Hunter's Tryst, Habbie's Howe, and Roslin—a class of rural entertainments for which Edinburgh has long been celebrated, and in which Ailie, as a belle of lively feelings and habits, had frequently participated.

The valentine, spread out carefully before her, consisted of a thin circular piece of paper, fancifully ornamented round the border, and sectioned into six divisions radiating from a centre. In each division was a verse in that species of rhyme which youths of eighteen, under the appropriate inspiration, have usually a marvellous facility in composing. Though the paper was considerably crumpled and worn, the verses, which bore to be addressed 'To Ailie,' were still as legible as ever. Ailie had read them over fifty times—perhaps fifty times to that. She had even sung them, with an accompaniment on her guitar; for her sister Lucy had taken a great fancy to them,

and adapted them to the plaintive air of that beautiful song of Moore, *Bendamere Stream*. Ailie had therefore the verses by heart; but now she indulged herself with one more perusal.

TO AILIE.

When I left the old home, by poortith oppressed,
My sisters in tears, and my mother distressed,
I ranged all around and ne'er found a joy,
Until I found thee, my sweet Ailie Gilroy.

You beamed on my sight like a bright beaming star,
With light bounding steps, in thy hand a guitar ;
With mind ever guileless, and looks ever coy,
You took my heart captive, dear Ailie Gilroy.

I've risen up early, and toiled until night,
But toiling to win thee is all my delight ;
Thy smile cheers me onward, and nought can destroy
The hopes I have anchored in Ailie Gilroy.

Buoyed up by the thought that you'll some day be mine,
I'll bear my fate bravely, and never repine ;
No frown of hard fortune can ever annoy,
With you to inspire me, dear Ailie Gilroy.

Then Ailie, dear Ailie, O list to my lay,
And give me thy true love for ever and aye,
In happily living without an alloy,
We both will be blest, my dear Ailie Gilroy.

Whate'er may befall, I will pray that my dear,
So bright in her beauty, no ill may come near,
That no wile may betray, nor deceit e'er decoy
The gentle, confiding, dear Ailie Gilroy.

‘The verses are pretty,’ thought Ailie, as she continued her reverie. ‘She could not at all understand who could have written them and sent them to her. It was very strange that out of this affected profession of regard nothing had ever come. The writer, who must have had his reasons for not coming forward, could scarcely be any one but Frank Lorimer. Frank was fond of poetry. But so was Bob Cameron; and there lay the difficulty. The allusion to “poortith” pointed strongly to Frank, and might have been suggested by his frequent singing of *O Poortith Could!* Yet, after all, that was no proof that Frank composed the verses. The song was a common enough song. She had heard it sung with much feeling and effect by genial old Bobby Miller, at an evening party in the house of Burns’s Clarinda. The reference to “poortith” might, therefore, be dismissed.

‘But, stop; can no clue to the writer be discovered in the handwriting? No; it is evidently a feigned hand. The “F”s are very like the “F”s of Frank Lorimer. But the “W”s greatly resemble the “W”s of Bob Cameron. The thing is altogether a mystery. Nobody can unravel it. How strange it is that young men persevere in sending valentines without signing their names, totally

regardless of the distracting conjectures which they raise in the minds of young ladies ! The practice should be put down by act of parliament. As to this mysterious composition, it was preposterous for her to think any more about it. Was she going to remain single all her days, in consequence of having once received a valentinè ? Not at all. She was fancy free, and would hold herself disengaged. On no account would she give encouragement to, or accept an offer from, Badsley. He ought to keep his distance, and leave her alone. Not that there was anything about him absolutely repulsive. The man was well enough ; only she did not care about him. The matter would require very careful consideration.'

Pensively leaning her head on her hand, and with eyes turned towards the broad expanse of the Firth, over which the white sea-birds were gracefully wheeling, the poor girl felt as if in a maze, through which she was unable to guide herself. The verses still lay before her. With a sigh, she was about to restore them to their place. A languor, however, crept over her. She laid the paper down. With eyes once more steadily gazing on the lines, she felt as if deprived of the power to remove them from her sight. The sentiments

expressed in some of the verses seemed for the first time to impress her with the depth of the affection entertained towards her by her unknown lover.

‘Ah!’ thought she musingly and with emotion, ‘there is no affectation in these sentiments. They are evidently from the heart. They must, they must be the sentiments of Frank Lorimer. It was foolish not to see that long ago. What a heroic, dear, good fellow! What kindness and piety are breathed by him in that last verse! Whatever may happen, whether he is ever able to explain his feelings to me or not, he prays for my welfare. He trusts that no ill may come over me. He petitions

“That no wile may betray, nor deceit e’er decoy
The gentle, confiding, dear Ailie Gilroy.”

O how my heart is like to break when I read these lines! He says: “The gentle, confiding.” Confiding! In whom have I to confide—whom have I to cling to as an earthly guide?’

Here Ailie’s feelings overcame her. Tears trickled down her pale cheeks, and dropped on the verses. For a minute she was in a sort of stupor. Making an effort to recover herself, and wiping her eyes, the idea flashed through her brain

that she would go to Frank Lorimer, and candidly ask his advice. With this notion prevailing in her mind, Ailie folded up and put away the verses with reverential care. But she had hardly done so, ere she changed her views. Again she soliloquised.

‘I cannot intrude myself on Frank. It would be improper, unfeminine, indelicate. No, I could not do it. I know the scorn with which Grace Pringle speaks of the mean devices of her cousin, Augusta Balchristie, to get a husband. I should feel myself disgraced if I played such tricks, or if any one should ever say that I made a pretence of asking the advice of Frank Lorimer regarding my affairs, in order to encourage him to make me an offer. It must not be. I must leave Frank to pursue his own course. And trusting that I shall be sustained in performing my duty, I shall just go quietly on.’

Such were the dreamy cogitations of Ailie, as she pondered on the affair in the solitude of her own apartment. We can fully appreciate and admire her feelings when resolving not to disclose her troubles to Frank, but view with regret the necessity which impelled her to be silent. Frank would have put the whole thing right at once, by advising her to quit her situation and go home, if the

approaches of the Great Miner became in the least degree offensive ; and thus have fortified a mind which stood much in need of invigoration. Laying aside any appeal to Frank, it may appear strange that Ailie, in her perplexities, should not have sought the counsel of her mother. A sense of delicacy, as has been said, and as she afterwards avowed, had kept her from mentioning the subject at home ; but more probably, her silence arose from an indecision which is common in the weaker class of minds. But, though so far chargeable with negligence, it is not clear that any advice from her mother would have altered the result. Counsel is of value only when the counsellor is capable of giving an intelligent and unprejudiced consideration of circumstances.

Whether Mrs Gilroy would have proved a more safe counsellor than many mothers who are presumed to care for the welfare of their daughters, may afterwards appear.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCENE WITH THE GREAT MINER.

THINKING that enough time had been allowed, the Great Miner, a few evenings afterwards, resumed his discourse on the advantage of having a wife to take charge of his family, and grace with her society the fine old manor-house in the parish of Badsley-cum-Bampton, Worcestershire, which was sure to be his ere long. Ailie foresaw what was coming, but had no more power to avert it than the linnet has to escape the downward and deadly sweep of the hawk. At the approach of what was to be a crisis in her fate, she had made up her mind neither one way nor another.

Rambling on in his very extraordinary manner, Mr Badsley on this occasion, gradually and with extraordinary skill, wrought himself up into a species of paroxysm. With winning words, forced

explosions of sentiment, and expressive gestures, the acting was complete. Ailie was stupefied, alarmed. She heartily wished that a third party had been in the room with her ; and half thought of hurrying to, and locking herself in, her own apartment. Before, however, she could form any determinate resolution, the cadet of an ancient family in the parish of Badsley-cum-Bampton, Worcestershire, came abruptly out with an offer of marriage. He declared with protestations that he 'respected, admired, loved her ; and he hoped she would consent to marry him. He would raise her to be a lady of fortune. She should be introduced to the first circles in London. She should take rank among the county families of Worcestershire.

'She should travel on the continent, and visit with him the most interesting cities and countries ; live in the best hotels, and dine at the table-d'hôtes. Knowing her taste for drawings and paintings, he would take her to see the finest picture-galleries and churches in Europe. What a treat was before her in looking for the first time at Paul Potter's "Bull" at the Hague, Rubens' "Descent from the Cross" at Antwerp, Raphael's "Madonna di San Sisto," and Correggio's "La Notte" at Dresden, the grand galleries of the

Louvre at Paris, the Palazzo Pitti at Florence, and the Vatican at Rome! Not a young lady in five hundred had such a chance of gratifying her taste for the fine arts. She might not be qualified to speak the continental languages, but that was not to give her any concern. He could speak French, German, and Italian with perfect fluency; and knew something of Dutch and Spanish. As regards the principal cities, he knew them about as well as he did London or Edinburgh. He could in three minutes write down the names of the best hotels in every place worth visiting.

‘The alliance,’ he continued, ‘would be exceedingly advantageous to the Gilroy family. His interest with the governor and directors of the Bank of England would enable him to get Tom a high degree of promotion. Her mother and sisters would have cause to rejoice in the connection. With respect to Ailie’s eldest brother, Joseph, who, he understood, was an able young man training for a learned profession at Aberdeen, if he would enter the church, he had sufficient interest with his mother’s cousin, the venerable Lord Bishop of Ely, to get him put in holy orders; after which, there would not be the slightest difficulty in procuring for him the living of Badsley-cum-Bampton. It was a rectory, worth about eight

hundred a year; not a great sum certainly, but there was a capital parsonage; and as the population was small, the duties would be very light. What a pleasant thing it would be for her, when she was residing at the old manor-house, to have a relation so near at hand!

‘Then,’ he observed, ‘with respect to your youngest brother, Dugald, to whom I have taken a great liking, he seems so clever, and so much of a man of business, notwithstanding his facetiousness, that, if he has any taste for the coal-trade, I could install him as superintendent of all my coal-traffic from the Tyne and the Wear to the ports of London and Hamburg. It would be worth, to him, probably about fifteen hundred a year. But that would be only a beginning. In the course of nature, I must retire from active pursuits; and Dugald’s fortune would be made. In short, nothing would give me greater happiness than to promote the welfare of your family along with your own. It always makes me happy to be doing good, when I am favoured with an opportunity.’

To these varied temptations, Ailie scarcely answered a word. The torrent of language overpowered her. She had not the presence of mind or fortitude to reply. In her bewilderment, she

was almost inclined to yield. The thought of staving off the affair by a reference to her mother now occurred to her. Timidly she said: 'The offer you have been so kind as make, comes on me with surprise, and I should like to consider the matter a little. It would be proper to speak to my mother.'

'Now, my dear Ailie,' replied the Great Miner, 'that answer will scarcely do.' You are your own mistress, and can act as you please without consulting anybody. You likewise know your excellent brother the cashier's high opinion of my character and position. What can you want to consider? You know, I have always been kind to you, and will be much kinder still.'

'Yes, yes,' answered Ailie, 'I know all that; but—but'——

Here her voice faltered. Her tongue refused to perform its office. The mental turmoil into which she was thrown, acting on a constitution far from robust, produced a depressing sensation of sickness. Her face became so deadly pale, that the Great Miner, who was anything but sensitive, felt a momentary degree of alarm.

'I feel unwell,' said Ailie, with a languid smile; 'and hope you will allow me to retire.'

'Certainly, by all means, my dear Ailie,' said

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Badsley, offering his arm ; 'and I will 'desire Mrs Barry to attend to you. Whatever you require you shall have.'

The Great Miner rung the bell for Jenny, and gave directions that everything should be done for the comfort of Miss Gilroy, who had suddenly been taken a little unwell.

Jenny, having seen Ailie to her room, and ministered to her a soothing draught, which she declared she knew by experience to be good for 'laying the nerves,' left her to her repose for the night, and reported to the widower that the 'young leddy' would probably be quite well in the morning.

'She's no very strong, sir,' observed the faithful domestic. 'She's a guid cratur, and real anxious about the young misses ; but she disna do to be put about wi' onything uncommon. Her mind has maybe been troubled about something ; but I daresay a guid sound sleep will put her a' richt.'

Mr Badsley received the communication graciously. He saw that he must proceed cautiously in his wooing, at all events at first. He must take a lesson from Richard, Duke of Gloucester, in acting on the mind of Lady Anne. An hour's study of *Richard III.* would not be thrown away. It would refresh his memory in the arts of flattery

and deception. With Richard as a model, he would devote a day or two's attentions to Ailie; and, as preliminary to a final move, gain, if possible, some degree of interest in her feelings.

Jenny Barry's prognostications as to the beneficial effects of a sound sleep were verified by the result. Ailie arose refreshed in the morning. The perturbation had passed away. With the gentleness and placability of her character, she thought but slightly of what had occurred to give her uneasiness. She recollected Mr Badsley's solicitude when committing her to the care of Jenny, and began to think that she had perhaps acted rather weakly. She would try to cultivate a little more strength of mind.

The Great Miner was not slow in perceiving that Ailie entertained no resentment on account of his somewhat abrupt declaration on the preceding night. She had resumed the placid and obliging manner, which favoured his new line of policy. As if circumstances were fated to assist him in his project, his youngest girl came running in with the intelligence that a large whale had been found stranded on the beach, and that crowds of people were going to look at it. Here was a chance for a move in the new game of deception.

Like a military engineer, who, by a series of

zigzag intrenchments, advances stealthily on a well-defended fortress, the Great Miner prepared to execute his first parallel.

‘Miss Gilroy,’ said Mr Badsley, with that kind of oily smoothness by which Richard overcame the dislike of and captivated Lady Anne, ‘I am sure you would feel interested in seeing the whale, and, if you please, I will escort you and the girls to the place where the creature is stranded. I had some transactions to attend to in Edinburgh to-day, but they must wait. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of being your escort.’

‘Oh, how kind of you, papa!’ said Sarah, the eldest daughter.

‘No doubt,’ continued Mr Badsley, addressing Ailie—‘no doubt, you would be safe enough with the three girls alone; but they could not explain the nature of the great monster of the deep. As I once made a voyage to Greenland in a whaling expedition from Hull, and actually harpooned, caught, and helped to flench a whale—a splendid specimen of the genus *Balæna*, seventy-three and a half feet long—I may be able to give you some amusing information about the poor animal that is said to be fixed on the sands.’

Ailie, as well as the three girls, was delighted with the proposal. The Great Miner seemed

almost a new man. His moody, suspicious look had vanished. He wreathed his countenance in smiles. His tongue was voluble in relating curious particulars about the whale-fishery—the outlook kept from the masts of the vessels, the rapid lowering and manning of the boats when a whale was sighted, the harpooning, the shouting, and the terrible commotion caused by the endeavours of the stricken animal to escape. The whole was as good as an entertaining popular lecture; and when, arriving at the stranded whale, the Great Miner discoursed on its breathing apparatus, the extent of its jaws, the way it caught its food as if in a sieve, and the mass of blubber likely to be secured, he excited the deepest interest in all within hearing.

The unusual phenomenon at Portobello had drawn numbers of people of all classes to the spot from the surrounding district. Joppa sent its quota of spectators, and from Inveresk and Musselburgh there was a concourse headed by the provost and magistrates. Taking up an advantageous position, Badsley was the observed of all observers.

‘Who is that gentleman who seems to know all about the whale?’ whispered the provost of Musselburgh. ‘He speaks as if he had been a regular whaler from Dundee or Peterhead.’

‘That’s the rich English stranger who lives in Portobello,’ was the reply. ‘He is known as the Great Miner, but lives very quietly. A wonderful man, full of information.’

‘He should come to stay in Musselburgh,’ said the provost. ‘We have grand golfing on the links, and we would make him a bailie. If he liked a genteel house, he could get Providence Hall, in Fisherrow.’

‘Yes,’ added one of the bailies; ‘and as the English are fond o’ guid eating, where will he find such meat as at Jamie Reid’s in Musselburgh? The Heuk-bane Club canna get the like o’t in the Fleshmarket Close.’

‘Quite right,’ observed another Musselburgh man; ‘and as I see that the Great Miner likes a guid coat on his back, he could get the best o’ claes from the Bird in Hand’—the allusion here being to a tailor who carried on business at the south end of the bridge at Musselburgh, under a signboard representing a hand holding a bird, and two birds perched at their ease on the top of a tree.

‘I dinna think Mr Badsley would care either about golf or being made a bailie, or even for Jamie Reid’s beef, or the Bird in Hand’s best-made coats,’ said Old Tammis Grindlay, the

Portobello baker. 'He likes Portobello for its quietness, and for being near Edinburgh, which he goes to almost every day wi' the omnibus. Ye needna expect to get the Great Miner. We dinna see meikle o' him, but he pays weel.'

Mrs Pringle and her daughter, Grace, had been brought out by the rumour about the whale. Recognising Miss Gilroy, they, like others, spoke complimentarily of Mr Badsley's interesting and very obliging explanations concerning the stranded animal.

'He seems to be a singularly well-informed man,' said Mrs Pringle to Ailie. 'I cannot say I ever heard him speak before. If he talks as fluently and with as much intelligence at home, it must be a privilege listening to his conversation.'

At this moment, Captain Frizell, a retired veteran of sturdy aspect, came up, and bowing to the ladies, hoped they had got sufficiently forward to get a good view of the whale, which certainly would prove a valuable waif.

'Who will be the owner of the animal?' asked Mrs Pringle.

'Oh, the crown, to be sure,' answered the captain, who was noted for his sagacity and shrewdness. 'You know the sturgeon and the whale are royal

fish. I see there is a constable already in charge, until the proper officer appears.'

'The crowd seems to be increasing,' said Mrs Pringle to Ailie; 'I think it would be prudent for us to retire.'

'I do not think we could go,' replied Ailie, 'until Mr Badsley comes to us. We are out for a walk with him.'

Captain Frizell overheard the remark, and inquired of Mrs Pringle if that was Mr Badsley who was explaining particulars about the whale; and if he was the Mr Badsley who was known as the Great Miner.

'The same,' said Mrs Pringle. 'He lives in Hawthorn Villa, at the foot of Tower Street, but though well spoken of, does not go much into company.'

'We must cure that bashfulness,' replied the captain. 'We must bring him out of his shell. Do you know if he plays whist?'

'I really cannot tell you, captain; but here is Miss Gilroy, the young lady who acts as governess of his children. She perhaps knows whether Mr Badsley is a whist-player.'

The captain touched his hat to Ailie.

'Mr Badsley,' she said, 'was well acquainted with whist, for he had one evening given her and

her pupils some instructions in the game. She remembered his strong injunctions as to always returning your partner's lead, remembering what is out, and never throwing away a good card when a lesser one will do.'

'Did you hear him say anything about points?'

'He spoke of the single, the double, and the rub, making four points; but I cannot say I understood his explanations. One thing I remember: he said he never liked to play whist for less than shilling points.'

'Just the 'man for us,' observed Captain Frizell. 'We must have him to be a member of our whist club, by all means. I must see about calling on him. It should have been done before.'

The Great Miner having exhausted his discourse on the whale, now returned to the ladies; and bowing to Mrs Pringle and Grace, retired with Ailie and his three girls. His suavity had left an agreeable impression on all. He needed only to shew himself, and take an interest in affairs, to be about the most popular man in Portobello; for the town being wholly a modern creation, there had not as yet sprung up any assumption of superiority over strangers, and perhaps the same thing can be said still of this pleasant resort of retired gentry.

Badsley's suavity, and indeed considerate kindness of manner, were not lost on Ailie. She saw he was a man whom the world was disposed to hold in esteem—a man who, if so disposed, would apparently find no difficulty in getting a wife in the better class of society. She felt her dislike of him melting away, as the snow in spring melts away under the influence of the mid-day sun.

The first parallel had been successfully effected.

During the remainder of the day, and for a day or two afterwards, the Great Miner followed up the ingenious design of performing the part of a languishing beau, not obtrusively so, but with a winning courteousness of manner, and desire to please, such as Edmund Kean was eminently master of in his grandest efforts of simulation. Badsley should have been an actor. By not devoting himself to the stage, he had inflicted on the world a cruel and irreparable loss.

CHAPTER IX.

A CRISIS IN THE FATE OF AILIE.

WHEN Jenny Barry, in speaking of the Great Miner, said: 'I canna just say he gangs to ony kirk in particular,' she, with characteristic national caution, meant that he went to no church at all, which was in reality the case. For reasons satisfactory to himself, he left the duty of church-going to the governess and his three daughters, with whose arrangements in this as in many other things he did not care to interfere.

As if now for the first time conscious that he did not in this respect set a good example to the family, and that a change in his conduct would promote his scheme for winning the respect of Ailie, he gratified her by announcing on Sunday morning that he intended to make one of the party to the Episcopal chapel.

'I am afraid, Miss Gilroy,' said he, 'you will

think me a heathen for never having gone to church with you and the children. The truth is, my mind has been so deeply engaged in analysing the great philosophies of antiquity—that of Plato, for instance—that I have for a time been rather neglectful in this duty. However, I intend in future to be quite exemplary as a church-goer; the pleasure of escorting you being not the least of the inducements.'

Ailie said, as well as felt, that it would be very agreeable to have Mr Badsley's company to church; nor did she fail to be struck with the fervour of his responses and amens. She likewise, in the walk home, listened with interest to what was to her a new species of information—his lucid explanations regarding the language employed in the English liturgical service.

'They talk,' said he, 'of the elegant language of Addison and Johnson. Why, it is English on stilts. Give me the nervous Anglo-Saxon of the Bible, and of John Bunyan, and of our noble liturgy—the language and fine ideas of those illustrious martyrs for religious liberty, Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley. It is only there that we find the well of English undefiled.'

'You, of course,' he inquired, 'have read the *Pilgrim's Progress* of Bunyan?'

‘O yes, many times,’ replied Ailie; ‘it is a great favourite in our house. I got a very pretty copy of it as a prize at school.’

‘Then,’ said the Great Miner, who became quite eloquent on the subject, ‘you will remember its nervous yet simple language, the pure Anglo-Saxon; and where do we find symbols so true to nature, such incitements to well-doing? You recollect the muck-raker and other things shewn by the Interpreter?’

‘I do indeed,’ said Ailie. ‘I recollect how the Interpreter shews a stately palace to Christian.’

‘That is right. I see you have a good memory, which is a most valuable quality to possess. You cannot fail to remember how the door of the palace was guarded by men in armour, but a brave man having resolved to force an entrance, first caused his name to be set down in a book, and then, sword in hand, and with a helmet on his head, fought his way into the palace, where he was received with rejoicing by the celestial inmates. Ah, John Bunyan, John Bunyan, who in the present day can match your glorious similitudes!’

And so on he went about Anglo-Saxon and Bunyan till they reached home in Tower Street.

‘What an extraordinary man Mr Badsley is!’ thought Ailie. ‘He seems to know everything.’

He is as much at home in the language of the Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, as in the Treaty of Vienna, and the art of flenching a whale and preparing the blubber. If he goes on at this rate, it would be almost worth my while to keep a notebook to write down what he says in the course of conversation.'

The going to church that day, and the subsequent harangue, proved a success. As a dexterous bit of dissimulation, it helped to advance the cause which the Great Miner had at heart. To pursue the language of military engineering, he had made his second parallel. Soon there was another opportunity for making an advance.

While Ailie was next morning seated at breakfast with the girls, a note was brought to her from Miss Pringle. This young lady mentioned 'that there was a proposition in hand for organising a female society in the town. The object of the scheme was the visiting and shewing of some sympathy for the destitute sick, and also to afford them some counsel on religious topics. It was to be under the special patronage of the Rev. Mr Glenfinan, but to be unsectarian, and on a broad principle of Christian charity. Would Miss Gilroy consent to be a member of the association?'

From a sense of duty, Ailie could not assent to

the proposal without mentioning the circumstance to Mr Badsley. If it met with his approval, she would at once become a member, for the objects of the society were in accord with her habits and feelings. Until she quitted Edinburgh, she had been a zealous and useful teacher in a Sabbath evening school. And so much had her services been appreciated, that, on her departure, the pupils presented her with a handsome pocket Bible. On being appealed to by Ailie, the Great Miner almost astonished her by his cordiality.

‘My dear Miss Gilroy, I admire your delicacy in first speaking to me on the subject. It shews your good sense. You know, for I have already told you, that I am always happy to have an opportunity of doing good. By all means, if you like, join the proposed society of young ladies, and at suitable times do what you can to assist in acts of kindness towards the sick poor. The association has my best wishes, I might indeed say my blessing, if that would be of any use.’

Ailie was charmed with such affability. Badsley appeared to her to have hitherto been a sort of saint in disguise. He had never done himself justice, and been considerably misunderstood. A pleasing change for the better was clearly coming over his character, or, at all events, his habits. It

would be a great matter, if, with his wealth and social position, he could be enlisted in the cause of piety and beneficence. And in her ruminations, she glanced at the idea of participating with him in the promotion of objects of charity and mercy.

The third parallel had been effected with as great success as the first and second.

On the succeeding day, Mr Badsley was to proceed to Glasgow on business. His intention was to go by the *Rob Roy* stage-coach at twelve, noon. A circumstance delayed his journey for a few hours. Having invited Miss Gilroy to a conference with his daughters, he said it would be a pleasant thing to have now and then some music in the evening. Sarah, the eldest girl, was competent to play on the pianoforte; Ailie might accompany the music with her guitar; and, as for himself, he would have no objections to sing to the best of his ability. 'What do you say to all this, Miss Gilroy? Everything depends on you.'

'I quite approve of the proposal,' answered Ailie. 'I think it would tend to improve the taste of the young ladies, and give them confidence in playing. As you are so kind as to offer to sing, I should feel obliged by your letting us have the music of the song of *Silvio*, which I had the

pleasure to hear you sing. I would try to teach the air to the girls.'

'I regret to say,' replied the Great Miner, 'that I have not a copy of the music of that old English cantata. The tune is quaint and original, unlike anything with which I am acquainted. I took a considerable fancy to the song, when I heard it sung by an old lady at Bath. The air is so fixed in my memory, that I think I could write out the notation, if you will give me a blank sheet of music-paper.'

Ailie thought the offer was exceedingly obliging, and hastened to bring a sheet of music-paper. When she put it into the hands of Mr Badsley, who was just about to start for the omnibus, he said with indescribable politeness: 'I should have been off by this time, in order not to lose a seat in the *Rob Roy* for Glasgow at twelve. But never mind; I will sit down quietly and execute the notation which you require. I shall be in good time for the *Blucher* at two.'

So saying, Mr Badsley sat down and patiently wrote down the air as well as the words of *Silvio*, which he presented to Miss Gilroy before departing on his journey. In her simple way, she thanked him for the trouble he had taken.

'No trouble at all, Miss Gilroy,' he said; 'I am happy to oblige you in so small a matter.'

The Great Miner had effected his fourth parallel. A little sapping would now, as he concluded, bring about a capitulation.

In less than ten days, Mr Badsley had made considerable progress in disarming Ailie's dislike—no, that is perhaps too strong a word—disregard of him, would be the more correct phrase. She did not previously care much about him. Now, she did care; certainly, not a great *déal*, but something. It had been shewn, as she imagined, that he possessed good moral, as well as intellectual qualities. He was clever to an astonishing degree. What man in ordinary life could have sat down, and, by merely humming over an air, noted it correctly for the pianoforte, including the bass accompaniment? Badsley was surely a most remarkable genius. Were she to be his wife, she would be able to develop and lead him to exercise the finer qualities of his nature. He had already avowed his desire to cultivate the higher faculties and emotions, without which the possession of wealth brought no real satisfaction.

It is never a very safe thing for a young lady to marry a man in the hope of reclaiming him, either from heretical notions or profligate habits. It was doubly hazardous in regard to a man of such strong will and confirmed ideas of his own

importance as the Great Miner. Yet Ailie, under the influence of the blandishments and diligent sapping to which she had been exposed, was now more inclined to say Yes than No, should Mr Badsley think of renewing his proposal. Since the interview at which he had made her an offer—an offer which remained in a state of suspended animation—the topic had not been renewed ; but it might be any day.

While thus softened in her feelings towards Badsley, Ailie one day received an invitation from Miss Pringle to attend an evening meeting of the newly constituted benevolent association, the Hon. Mrs Houghton to be in the chair. To make some preparations in the way of dress for this assemblage, Ailie required to open and rummage through her trunk. This was a trifling matter, which no one could imagine would have turned the current of her thoughts. But it did so, to a very serious degree. There lay the bundle of old papers ; there—for the end of it was perceptibly projecting beyond the papers about it—lay that precious literary treasure, the valentine that had, presumably, been sent to her by Frank Lorimer.

In an instant, at sight of the paper, there was a revulsion of feeling. Expectations and notions

concerning the Great Miner were banished thousands of miles away, into empty space. In looking at those cherished verses, in reading the concluding prayer that she might be preserved from all wile and deceit, poor Ailie felt like one coming out of a mesmeric trance. She was back to her true and simple nature. Badsley might be worthy of respect for some good points that had been revealed in his character; but, in the depth of her heart, she did not think she could love him with a woman's love. She hoped he would not renew his offer, and so spare her from a fresh and, it might be, a very unpleasant scene.

Ailie did not know the villainy of the character she had to deal with, and for whom, in mental resources, she was no match. Flight would have been her only chance of safety; but she did not flee, nor think of flight. Shielded in confiding innocence, ignorant of what the unprincipled may be guilty of, she remained at her post.

Badsley was unaware of the effects wrought by the sight of the valentine. He flattered himself that his deceptions had been eminently successful in winning the regard of Ailie; and that he might now advantageously recur to the subject of marriage, which had been so unfortunately broken off. Yet, he was too practised a strategist

to trust altogether to fair words. He was determined she should be his wife, and resolved on a plan which, considering her weak powers of defence, would almost to a certainty secure the end he had in view.

We are prepared for some scepticism as to the probability of any man in the position of Badsley giving himself so much trouble to compass the forcible marriage, and, practically, the life-long misery, of a being so harmless, so unportioned, so undistinguished socially as Ailie Gilroy. What his reasons were for committing this great iniquity will afterwards become apparent. That which we have to do with here is the fact as it occurred.

On the evening after Ailie attended the meeting at the house of Miss Pringle, the Great Miner had some music, at which all contributed something for the general amusement. Ailie played on the guitar, as an accompaniment. Mr Badsley, by request, sang the cantata of *Silvio*. When the girls had retired, he seemed to feel that the moment had arrived for him to renew his suit. Ailie was seated at the table, looking over a collection of Scottish musical pieces. He was seated opposite to her, when, with studied courtesy, he opened the subject.

‘I almost fear to speak to you, Miss Gilroy, on

what I was talking to you about a few evenings ago, when you became unwell. It has given me great pleasure to see you completely recovered, and I hope you will kindly consider what I am about to say.'

Ailie looked up from the music-book, and drew a long breath, as if priming herself for what was to ensue, but said nothing.

'You may have seen, my dear Ailie,' he continued, 'that I am exceedingly anxious to stand well in your favour. I have already told you that your marriage with me would greatly advance the interests of your family. You yourself would no longer require to go out as a governess, or to toil in any respect for your bread. As my wife, you would be kindly treated, have wealth at your disposal, and me to enter with you into those schemes of piety and benevolence which are so befitting to your own generous nature. I cannot doubt we shall live very happily together. Come, good, dear Ailie, I trust you will give your consent.'

Ailie, this time, did not sink under her emotions. She had steeled herself against that. Modestly she said in reply: 'I am much obliged to you, Mr Badsley, for thinking so well of me. But, on consulting my own heart, I feel that it would be

wrong to accept your offer. I am not worthy to be your wife. You deserve a lady of fortune, not a poor girl like me.'

'There you wrong yourself, Ailie,' answered the Great Miner. 'It is for your intrinsic worth I offer you my hand. Wealth I care nothing for, as I have plenty of it already. Come, think of it again, and say Yes.'

'I am very, very sorry,' responded Ailie, 'but I cannot give my consent. I pray you, do not press me at the present moment. I would like to think a little more over it. Better to wait for a few days.'

'Not a day, not an hour, not a minute,' interrupted her suitor in a state seemingly bordering on derangement; at the same time pulling a pistol from his pocket.

Appalled at this frightful demonstration, Ailie grew dizzy with terror. Was Badsley going to murder her? She clung to the table to steady herself.

'Listen to me,' shouted the Great Miner in a tone which thrilled through her system. 'You observe this instrument of destruction. It is not to harm you, but myself. My mind has for some days been made up. My resolution is this—either that you consent to marry me, or that

I shoot myself. Long have I pondered on the most agreeable method of self-destruction.'

'Oh, Mr Badsley, don't, don't speak of anything so horrible,' said Ailie.

Badsley paid no attention to her remonstrance, but continued: 'Out there'—pointing seawards, where the waves of the Firth were rolling in wild murmurs on the sandy beach—'out there, I thought of drowning myself. But, on reflection, the idea was distasteful. I should not like to go into the sea with my clothes on, and feel the salt water going down my throat, and see, as I am dying, horrid creatures swimming about, with their ugly gray eyes and big mouths staring me in the face, as if ready to devour me; worst of all, how disgusting to think of being, when life is extinct, thrown ashore by the tide, like the poor whale we saw the other day, with half the town poking at me with their sticks, and making their vulgar remarks on my appearance.'

'Oh, do stop, stop!' said Ailie, piteously. 'You absolutely frighten me.'

'I cannot stop; I must go on. I say that, on reflection, I gave up the idea of a watery death. All things being taken into account, my preference is to die by the pistol, as the quickest, handiest, and least offensive mode of going out of the world.'

So saying, and rising to his feet, Badsley assumed the attitude of a man who was about to shoot himself. 'Here's for it,' cried he with wild glaring eyes, and pointing the little instrument to his forehead. 'For the last time, I ask you to say Yes or No.'

Any young lady with her senses about her might have known that all this was only a piece of vapouring talk—only a cruel trick to frighten her into obedience—and that the man had not the most remote intention to destroy himself. Ailie was unfortunately deserted by her senses, exactly when they should have been under her command. There stood Badsley clutching the pistol, and, as she believed, on the brink of eternity—a human being about to go to his account with the horrible sin of suicide on his head. And all depended on her decision. Dreadful position to be placed in. The arbiter of an immortal soul. She felt as in a frightful dream. Placing her hands on her eyes, wild thoughts rushed through her brain. Was she at once to yield to this most extraordinary mode of wooing, in order to prevent the commission of a deadly sin? Should she hold out, or should she give in? Her mind was a chaos.

'Oh, don't, don't,' again she cried; 'don't kill yourself. Think of the sin of such an act. Think,

do think of the disgrace to your name and to your family !'

On making this final appeal to Badsley, Ailie sunk back exhausted in her chair, her features pallid with horror. Her behaviour may be pitied, but by no means commended. Instead of yielding to this gust of terror, she had a choice of two lines of conduct. If sufficiently shrewd to see through his disreputable stratagem to frighten her, and inclined to treat the matter jocularly, she might have told Badsley to shoot himself, if he liked ; it was no matter to her. Or, she might have indignantly, and with a due regard to self-respect, left the room, and forthwith quitted the house. For whether Badsley was in earnest or not, his conduct could admit of no justification. In the case of any such outrageous proceedings, a young lady would be entitled to take her summary departure, irrespective of all consequences. But are young ladies ever instructed how to act with the proper degree of decision and self-possession when, in cases like this, life-long comfort is at stake ?

Again, we must refer to mothers, from whose imperfect warnings or instructions often come so much that is to be deplored. As things go, what an eager scramble for husbands ! Mothers, as

in the case of Mrs Balchristie, contriving all sorts of plans to secure eligible matches for their daughters. What plotting, what scheming; and how often all in vain! One cannot but be at times shocked at seeing an encouragement given to the addresses of young men of idle, frivolous, and unprincipled habits—men who never honestly earned a shilling, and never will be able to do so; men full of pretension, as regards rank, connections, and so forth—all vapour and sham; men without any substantial patrimony, who are only kept from begging their bread by audacious imposition, or the donations of relatives; men of whom not a single good thing can be said, and from whom scarcely any good can ever be expected.

Ailie was the victim of a weak mother; and not only so, but of deficient culture. She had been launched into the world, unconscious of the guile she might encounter. She knew there were bad people; but, in her simplicity, imagined that they were only those poor ragged beings who appear at the bar of police courts, and that they did not dare to exhibit themselves in drawing-rooms in a high style of fashion. How she was destined to be undeceived in these infantile notions! From now a very long time ago, the incarnation of evil

has had a knack of appearing in a handsome and very alluring guise ; is well bred, well fed, well dressed—no matter at whose expense—and has studied the part he wishes to perform with the skill of an artist. Vice appears in rags and wretchedness only as a last resource. The outward and visible sign to be dreaded is excessive finery !

In a work of fiction where the sensational is to be consulted, a heroine placed in the trying situation of Ailie would be described as scorning the addresses of Badsley, and rushing off with the dignity of a high-souled princess in a tragedy. As here we are only relating an incident as it occurred in real life, the pleasure is denied us of giving this agreeable colour to the transaction.

Ailie, we say, sunk back in her chair, shocked, overpowered with contending emotions. She sat still, and hesitated, and was lost. Unhappily, she believed what was said by the Great Miner, and knew the determined resolution of the man. The prospect of wealth, and social distinction, and personal ease, would have failed to sway her ; but the conviction, however mistaken, that she would be the cause of a suicide, was unendurable. Her piety shrunk from the possibility of self-reproach. Her duty was to do good, and avert the

commission of evil. By a single word, she had it in her power to avert the commission of an enormous sin, and so save the rest of her life from being miserable.

The fatal word was spoken. She said: 'Yes'—a very small but a most important word on such an occasion—adding, in a low tone of voice, 'I consent, and I hope it will be all for the best.'

Calming down from his affected frenzy, Mr Badsley graciously smiled, and put away his pistol, which, by the way, had not been loaded. He had never had any intention to destroy himself, either by drowning or shooting. The exhibition of the pistol was only a part of the manœuvre to alarm her into an assent to his wishes; and the trick had no doubt been suggested from a knowledge of the credulity of his victim.

'You have acted wisely, my dear Ailie,' said he in his most winning manner. 'There is no fear of all going right. As my wife, you will be the happiest of the happy.'

Ailie did not feel quite sure that such would be the case. Subsiding into her usually calm tone of mind, she tried to hope she would be happy. We say tried, for sometimes she felt as if she had done wrong. Her consent had been wrung from her almost by a deed of violence. She had in

effect come under a promise to love a man for whom she entertained no affection. She had infringed one of the most sacred obligations of humanity. And what is that obligation? It is to give the hand only when there is also given the heart. It is true she had broken no pledge. She had never before been asked in marriage; and it might be reasoned that she was entitled, as a free maiden, to do as she liked. Alas, for such reasoning! How it too often fills the eyes with tears, and surrounds us with objects the most mournful, the most pitiable! We are entitled to do as we like, but only when what we like is right; and of this a properly cultured conscience is the safe and authorised monitor.

CHAPTER X.

MATRIMONIAL ANTICIPATIONS—AUNT TOLMIE.

AILIE was ill at ease. She was what is called 'engaged'—a position thought to be very enviable by young ladies. But, in the circumstances, she could scarcely be envied. Her happiness was not of a wholesome kind. It was spasmodic. Sometimes she thought she had acted rightly, and sometimes she feared she had done wrong. Not, however, possessing acute feelings, she in a general way followed a common habit of thought. She struck a balance between opposing sensations, and made the best of it.

It required some courage to tell her mother what she had done. To give the explanation personally was too much for her. Accordingly, she wrote a note, stating that, after most earnest solicitation, she had consented to marry Mr Badsley. The unexpected announcement caused

no little stir in the maternal home. Ailie going to be married! What a most extraordinary thing!—how the intelligence of the anticipated event would astonish everybody!

Mrs Gilroy recognised nothing objectionable in the match. On the contrary, she viewed it as a realisation of the good-fortune prognosticated by that marvellous circumstance—the alighting of the white dove on the window-sole of her bedroom on the morning of the day she went to Portobello.

The sisters, while slightly envying Ailie for her good luck in marrying such a grand man as the Great Miner, were pleased with the prospect of having a new and genteel house, where they might occasionally shew off. Ailie would no doubt get a carriage, in which they would frequently have a pleasant ride. What a delightful thing to go shopping with Ailie in her carriage! There would be no longer a necessity for ferreting out cheap sales of dresses. With Ailie, they would visit the best establishments. When the footman called out for Mrs Badsley's carriage at the door of the theatre, there would be whispers that Mrs Badsley was a sister of the Misses Gilroy. Very fine that. How they would be all looked up to by the people on the stair! But obviously, from what was about to happen, it would not do for

them any longer to live in a common stair. They must have a house with a main door, or a villa. So much for the anticipations of the sisters.

Dugald, who always chose to take an eccentric, though far from unwise, view of affairs, was not uplifted by the proposed marriage. He drily observed that Ailie had been in too great a hurry. She might have waited. He was not sure about the Great Miner being all that he represented himself to be.

These observations did not give satisfaction to Mrs Gilroy and her daughters. They thought that Dugald was too sharp and critical, and did not make sufficient allowance for the wealth and importance of the Great Miner.

'It is shameful in you, Dugald,' said Nancy, 'to speak in that disrespectful manner of Mr Badsley, a man of immense fortune, and who owns, as you know, a coal-pit eight hundred feet deep.'

'How do I know anything about his fortune or his coal-pit?' replied Dugald testily. 'He may call his coal-pit a thousand feet deep, if he likes. The whole thing may be a piece o' nonsense.'

'Well, at all events,' said Nancy, 'there can be no doubt about that splendid diamond ring of Mr Badsley's, which you have seen with your own eyes. No man wears such a magnificent

brilliant without having a fortune in the background.'

'I do not pretend to be a judge o' rings,' rejoined Dugald. 'For anything I can tell, the ring of the Great Miner may only be a bit o' cut glass. I have seen as fine things in Rankin's crystal shop. It is not all gold that glitters.'

'O Dugald, Dugald!' interposed the mother. 'I am shocked wi' your want o' faith. Instead o' believing in what people say, you are aye settin' up your ain opinion, and cangling wi' everything. You even winna believe in the omen o' the white dove, that has been such a blessin' to the family.'

'No, that I won't,' said Dugald doggedly. 'I ken that the pigeon was only ane o' Professor Dick's white doos, and folk will laugh if ye keep speakin' aboot it as being an omen of either ae thing or anither.'

'They daurna do sic a thing,' said the mother.

'But I tell you they would daur,' rejoined Dugald. 'I've heard Frank Lorimer and Bob Cameron laughin' at a great rate, often and often, at the auld horse-shoe you keep nailed to the back o' the door; and I've a great mind to tear it off, and throw it into the street. If Frank and Bob get hold o' the omen o' the white dove, we'll

never hear an end o't. They only need a hair to mak a tether.'

'I'll no say another word to you, Dugald,' said Mrs Gilroy. 'I maun speak to our minister, the Reverend Dr Twethel, about you.'

'Well, well,' responded Dugald, determined to cut the matter short, 'you can speak to onybody ye like, or believe what ye like. It's naething to me. As to Ailie's marriage wi' Badsley, I think it's a very foolish business. But I won't interfere, for it would be of no use.'

Tom, the cashier, looking at the thing in a business and social point of view, thought that the match could not but prove highly advantageous. The family had been a little pulled down; and this marriage of Ailie would have a certain restorative effect. As is well known, one thing always leads to another. When one sister goes off, the chances are that others will follow. A break in the ranks was always a good thing. Would not young men relish the idea of having for a brother-in-law the Great Miner, whose bills were as good as the Bank of England?

Tom had another reason for looking well on the marriage. Mr Badsley had opened an account with the agent who sold Petersham hats, and begun to distinguish himself as a man of indisputably

fine taste by wearing a 'Petersham.' This was a most interesting fact, in the opinion of the cashier, by whom mankind were divided into two special classes—those noble souls who wore Petershams, and those inferior beings who did not. Tom, therefore, to his inexpressible satisfaction, was now to have a relative who wore a Petersham hat!

In the few circumstances now narrated, we have a curious and instructive instance of that species of inconclusive evidence in which proceedings of vital importance are on some occasions irrevocably determined. A simple inexperienced girl, upright in principle, and deserving of a better fate, agrees to marry a man whom she knows little about, and does not care for, because he threatens to shoot himself if she refuses. Her mother approves of the match, because it is warranted by an imaginary omen. Her sisters are equally satisfied, because they expect to get rides in a carriage, of the existence of which there is no absolute assurance. Her brother, the assumed head of the house for all practical ends, and who, from his connection with business, should have known better, assents to this deplorable desecration of the marriage tie, because none of the so-called Great Miner's bills have been protested, and because he has, at some

silly recommendation, or possibly for some sinister purpose, begun to wear a peculiarly shaped hat! There goes a specimen of reasoning in a tolerably well-to-do, and altogether respectable family. No distinct inquiry is made regarding the antecedents of the stranger who is to be allied with the family. From a variety of whimsical fancies, all is taken on trust.

The marriage arrangements were pushed forward with greater speed than Ailie was prepared for, or thought becoming. The only breathing-time she could secure was a fortnight, to make a few calls on friends, and effect some indispensable changes of wardrobe. For this purpose, she went home, and daily occupied herself less or more by visits to old acquaintances. She did not drive up to doors in a carriage, and stiffly leave cards inscribed with 'P.P.C.' as some young ladies in like circumstances make a point of doing. Ailie, indeed, had never got the length of flourishing a card-case, or of having cards engraved with her name. A pennyworth of plain cards, with her name in writing, was what she contented herself with. Having placed half a dozen of these in a corner of her reticule, she made the required round of calls. The first of all, as in duty bound, was to Grand-aunt Tolmie, who had shewn such remarkable

kindness in making some presents, when setting out as a governess.

Miss Tólmie's residence was one of those old villas, stuck in the midst of a garden and pleasure-ground, which lie basking in the sun, in one of the suburbs; and which was reached by an avenue lined with tall trees. The whole place was as secluded, quiet, and nearly as antiquated as a convent; the hum of the town was faintly heard outside, but the only hum within was that of a colony of bees pursuing their industrial occupation amidst clusters of flowers and tufts of ornamental bushes. As for the house, a square mansion without claims to the picturesque, it might have been a grand place in the days of yore. In the present day, it had a dull and half-deserted look. The flag-stones around it were green with vegetation; and the doors of one or two outhouses hung pensively on a single hinge, as if ready to drop off at the first violent gust of wind.

In front of the building was a grass-plot, which had at one time been decorated with figures in white marble representing heathen gods standing fancifully on pedestals. All were now gone. The only relic was a figure of Pan with a broken leg, which lay on its back amidst the grass, but still appearing

to play on the pan-reed, as if furnishing music to the fragment of leg, which remained in a dancing attitude on the summit of the pedestal.

The interior of the mansion would have pleased an antiquary. The stair was furnished with heavy balustrades of intensely dark mahogany, with the polishing of a hundred years' traffic. The apartments had heavy cornices, and over the mantelpieces were panels containing paintings by Norrie—dim sort of landscapes of the Claude Lorraine type, shewing a river, a fisherman, trees, and some classic ruins, which had been looked at and admired by generations who had long been dead and gone.

Set down in the corner of a couch covered with chintz of an old pattern, Ailie speculated on what might be the nature of her reception; and not without a feeling of trepidation did she hear her venerable relative approach, leaning on her crooked-headed stick, with which at every movement she made a resounding noise in the passage.

'So ye're gaun to be married, are you?' said the old lady as she entered the room, and with a grimly dubious smile shook Ailie by the hand. 'I think the world is a' gane daft wi' marryin'. Naething else is now thought of.'

'Well, aunt, I suppose it is all right in the main. There will be marrying till the end of time.'

‘Nae doubt, nae doubt, my bairn ; you maunna heed what I say. I was ance gaun to be married mysel’ ; but there was a waesome end to the business, and mony a time afterwards did I greet about it. My greetin’, however, couldna bring back the dead. I tried to be resigned—His will be done ! I am thankful for my mercies.’

‘I never heard, dear Aunt Tolmie, that you were once going to be married. I am sure few know anything about it,’ said Ailie.

‘I have seldom spoken of it,’ replied the aged spinster ; ‘for what would have been the use of it ? But now that you are on the head o’ your marriage, I may tell you.’

Aunt Tolmie’s tale of disappointment was soon told.

‘Ye maun ken,’ she proceeded, now and then diverging into her Scotch dialect, ‘that in my young days I attended the dancing assemblies that took place in a floor in the High Street. Although it was not a grand-lookin’ place, everything was conducted wi’ rigorous propriety, under the direction of the Honourable Miss Nicky Murray, a sister of the Earl o’ Mansfield. Ane o’ my dearest companions was Annie Rutherford, the mother of Walter Scott, who has lately been writing sae mony auld-warld stories. Weel, ye

see, at these dancing assemblies, it was the practice for the young gentlemen to choose their partners by their fans. It was a kind o' lottery. All the young leddies put their fans into a hat, and every gentleman took the first that cam' to hand, and the leddy that owned the fan was his partner for the evening, or sometimes langer. There was often great fun about drawing the fans.'

'But,' interrupted Ailie, 'did the gentlemen not know what fan to seize hold of?—was it all guess-work?'

'Not quite blind chance,' continued the old lady. 'For sometimes the gentlemen had an inkling as to what each leddy's fan was like, and tried to select the one they preferred. However, Miss Nicky did a' she could to stop these irregularities.'

'And had you a fan, Aunt Tolmie?'

'That I had. It was an elegant thing, not very new in appearance, for it was given to me by a leddy who made a figure langsyne at the Hunters' balls at Holyrood. It was a weel-kenn'd fan. At ane o' the assemblies, it was drawn by a handsome young man in naval uniform, Jamie Galbraith, belonging to a respectable family in town. Jamie had been bred to the medical profession, and was appointed to be a surgeon in the

royal navy. At this time, he was on leave from his ship, and from his fine figure, and his gold-laced uniform, and his cheerful disposition, he was a great favourite at Miss Nicky Murray's balls.

'From one thing to another, after dancing several times wi' Dr James Galbraith—for I should give him his right name—we became intimate, and we walked together with the consent of my mother, who was a widow lady living in the Castlehill. Sometimes our rambles were as far as Blackford Hill, and I remember the day as if it were yesterday, when, sitting down on a little knoll which looked out on the city, he put his hand round my waist, and whispered that he loved me. The thrill of that magic touch can never, never be forgotten. Soon, with my mother's approval, we were engaged, and it was arranged that we were to be married within two years. Poor fellow, he had a sister partly depending on him, and he thought it prudent not to marry until he had got up a step in the service.'

Here Aunt Tolmie for a moment broke down in the narrative. Her feelings got the better of her on calling up these harrowing recollections. Rallying, however, she proceeded :

'Weel, you see, to make a long tale short, Jamie was forced by his duty to leave me. It was a long

wearisome two years for me that followed. Every day and week was counted till he was to come back. At last, when the two years were nearly out, his ship, the *Royal George*, went into Portsmouth harbour for repairs. He then had the promise of being allowed to come to Edinburgh to be married; sae everything was to appearance settled. I got my marriage things ready. They were made by Mrs Clark, the famous dressmaker, and now only waited for my brave young man's arrival. Letters were lang on the road at that time—not much less than a fortnight from Portsmouth—and the stage-coaches were very uncertain. Often they were a hale day, or a day and a half, behind their time.

'These delays, my dear, were very distressing. When I learned by a letter to expect Jamie, I thought it but proper to dress myself in a way that might please him. He had often praised my hair, which was lang and nicely dressed up with powder, as was the practice o' every leddy at the time. Sae I was determined to have my hair done up in the very best style to receive him. I had it carefully frizzed, and powdered, and kept up at a height of eighteen inches, towering above my head by means of large pins and wires. As the least thing would have deranged it, I sat down,

in a chair to wait for the expected moment when he would rush into the room. But the day and the hour cam, and still no Jamie. The coach was to arrive at Peter Ramsay's at the Cowgate Port, on Wednesday at two. I had the lass waitin', but she waited, and waited in vain, and cam back with the report that there were nae news o' the coach. It might be nicht before it appeared.

'Mrs Eagle, a valued friend o' the family, who lived down the street, was much interested, and undertook to try and gather news o' the coach, and let me know when anything was heard about it. But not a word did I hear. I sat a' nicht in the chair, for I durst not lie down for fear o' spoilin' my grandly towering hair. In the mornin', there I was still seated, and on and on I sat till past four o'clock on Thursday afternoon, when a message cam frae Mrs Eagle that the coach had just come in, but that it had not brought Dr Galbraith as a passenger.

'Oh, what a sair heart was mine! Nae Jamie, and nae letter! Caring naething now about my hair, I threw myself on the bed, and grat mysel' nearly blind. About six o'clock, an awfu' rap cam to the outer door. The visitor was kind old Mrs Eagle, who had hurried up the street wi' a

piece o' terrible news that was fleein' through the town. The *Royal George* had turned ower and sunk in Portsmouth harbour, and a' on board were drowned—my own dear James among the rest o' the officers and crew. What I felt, and how I mourned, canna be described. Oh, that terrible 29th o' August in the year '82, what a distress it brought to many a home! It will never be forgotten by me while I have the breath of life. Bitter, bitter did I lament the death of that worthy and noble-spirited young man in the very flower o' his days, and I vowed that I would, for his sake, never marry another.'

'What a dreadful affair that was!' said Ailie. 'Aunt, have you any likeness preserved of Dr Galbraith?'

'Yes, hinny; but it is but a sma' thing—not what I could have wished. Yet I often sit looking at it till my auld een are bleared wi' tears. It's wrang o' me—I ken it's wrang. But it's human nature.'

Old Aunt Tolmie now conducted Ailie into her bedroom, a small apartment, almost half-filled with a four-post bed hung with pure white dimity curtains, and having in one corner a bureau, japanned and ornamented with fantastic gold figures. Over the mantel-piece, as if set in a sacred

shrine, was seen a small silhouette portrait in a black oval frame. It was a thing apparently of no value as a work of art, yet such was the object on which the aged lady had lavished a species of adoration for the greater part of a lifetime. The silhouette pictured the bust of a young gentleman in naval uniform—the features prominent, indicative of firmness and intelligence. From the forehead the hair was drawn back, and terminated in a queue, which hung over the collar of the coat. The breast was decorated with a delicate frill, the lightness of which had a good effect as a relief to the hard darkness of the portrait.

Having given Ailie some account of the picture, and dwelt for a few moments fondly on the outline of the features, Miss Tolmie proceeded to open the bureau, in which were contained some much-cherished memorials of past times. The first thing she shewed Ailie was her fan—that identical fan which Dr James Galbraith had drawn at one of Miss Nicky Murray's assemblies, and which had led to so many fond remembrances, so many heart-aches. It was a fan of a dingy colour, dating, to all appearance, from the reign of Queen Anne, embellished with a hunting scene of deer chased by dogs, with several small gilt Cupids flying in the clouds overhead. Now a thing of the past, it

silently spoke of scenes and events lingering in no one's memory but that of the frail old lady, who could not long preserve it from being swept to the old curiosity-shop—that tomb of affectionate remembrances, which no one of any feeling can pass without a sigh.

‘Yes, my dear,’ said Miss Tolmie, ‘that is the very fan by which I became Jamie’s partner. It is of no use to me now, nor has been for many a lang day, but it is a comfort for me to have it, and to look at it. It binds me to the memory of him that’s away. If you were gaun to a fancy ball, and wanted a fan to complete the costume o’ a leddy in the reign o’ George I., I could lend it to you; but I couldna gie it away. Na, I couldna do that. I will keep the fan—the fan which Jamie has had mair than ance in his hand—I will keep it till the last. My resolution is to die with it by my side, and to kiss it just as I go away to meet wi’ my dear Jamie. So, you see, I couldna part wi’t. Na, I couldna do that. It is impossible.’

‘I am much obliged to you, Aunt Tolmie,’ said Ailie, ‘for the offer of lending me that curious old fan which you so highly prize; but there is not the least chance of my needing it. Mr Badsley speaks of introducing me to some of his great relations in Worcestershire, and I shall probably

have to dress pretty well at their dinner and evening parties. I do not, however, expect to be at any fancy balls. Certainly, I would rather avoid gaieties of that kind.'

'Weel said, Ailie, weel said; keep to that,' replied the old lady. 'The world is a' a parcel o' vanity, yet it will not do to keep out of it altogether. Duties often oblige us to do a number o' things we dinna like. I've nae doubt ye'll mak' a guid wife; and that, without going into the follies o' the present fashion, ye'll aye be nicely dressed. Hae ye a watch?'

'No,' said Ailie, 'I have never had a watch. Perhaps Mr Badsley will give me one.'

'Ye needna wait for that,' responded old Aunt Tolmie, pulling out a small drawer in the bureau, which disclosed a gold watch lying in a small box among some cotton. Lifting it from this obscure receptacle, she thus addressed Ailie:

'Take this little old watch as a gift from me, my dear Ailie. It has been mair than a hundred years in the family, and was always reckoned a kind o' precious heirloom. It was given to my father by his affectionate mother, when he entered the army. That watch has been within the sound o' many a drum, many a cannon-shot, and many a hurrah of brave British grenadiers.'

'Oh, how much I have to thank you, dear Aunt Tolmie, for giving me such a valuable and beautiful watch,' said Ailie.

'Listen to me, my dear,' continued Aunt Tolmie. 'You should know something about this watch. My father, Captain Tolmie, had it in his pocket when he fell mortally wounded at Bunker's Hill. It was brought home to us by the sergeant of his company. I mind the man bringing it, and puttin' it in my mother's hands; and when she got it, she kissed it. At that time, my mother was living in Edinburgh, superintending the education of two daughters, her only children. Of these I am the sole survivor. The other was your grandmother, and you are called after her. Her marriage did not please my mother, who, on that account, left nearly the whole of her property to me, which I think was not right. So, take this watch, and be careful in preserving it. You will never part with it, but hand it down in the family. Though it is an auld watch, the works are still good, and it keeps time beautifully. See, here is the way to wind it up.'

Ailie was overcome with gratitude. She had never had a watch. This was to be her first, and such an elegant and interesting thing it was! Small in size, it was about as thick as it was

broad. The case was finely ornamented with figures in *bas-relief*, representing a fanciful scene in the style of Watteau. The enamelled dial was also pictorial. On it were represented, in colours, the figures of a lady and gentleman, seated on a bank of flowers, and dressed in the court costume of Louis XIV. Near them were a dog and some musical instruments, while in the back-ground were a few trees, for the sake of perspective.

Ailie was enchanted with the gift, which she declared she would never part with all her life. Be she happy, or be she miserable, that little watch should be her companion. Kissing dear old Aunt Tolmie for all her kindness, she, by means of a ribbon, hung the watch from her neck, and nestled it safely in her bosom. Then bidding good-bye to her venerable relative, she hastened home to relate the interesting events of the day to her friends at the family fireside.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BEST-MAN AND BRIDESMAIDS—DR MAC- GLEISH'S MARRIAGE PRESENT.

IN the course of the next few days, Ailie made farewell calls on several others to whom she had been indebted for friendly attentions. It does not seem necessary to go into a regular account of these perambulations. Only two visits may be mentioned.

While she was pondering on who should be first visited, she, somewhat to her surprise, received a polite note from Miss Augusta Balchristie, expressing a desire to see her. Augusta, it should be understood, was still unmarried. Since the breakdown of expectations concerning Major Drivel, who was now no more heard of than, if he had never existed, she had endeavoured, through her mother's agency, to secure a seeming eligible in the —th Highlanders, such being the new regiment that had succeeded the Royals in the

Castle. The regiment, both officers and men, had been long noted for its propriety of conduct, as well as for its gallantry in the field, and as it remained two years in the garrison, the attempt of Mrs Balchristie was a protracted disappointment. Her character as an unscrupulous manœuvrer was now well known, and joked over, in the mess-room, where she went by the jocular name of the Drum-major. And, apprehensive of being drawn into a connection, there was a disposition to be rather shy of invitations to her hot luncheons and kettledrums.

Driven, in a sense, from this prolific field of flirtation, Augusta, with concurrence of Julia, somewhat relaxed the hard and fast line which separated muffs from the rest of the human race. A feeling grew up in their minds that there was a possibility of picking up a suitable husband just on the borders of muffism. He might not be quite, or technically, an eligible, but, with tolerably good connections, and with sporting propensities, he might pass in the absence of anything better. It was while in this humour that Miss Augusta Balchristie wrote the note to Ailie, inviting her to call at her convenience; and, though far from admiring Augusta's intriguing propensities, she went on the following day.

'I am delighted to see you, Miss Gilroy,' said Augusta, who was seated at a small side-table in the drawing-room, and immediately moved to the sofa. 'Pray, sit down beside me. I have heard of your approaching marriage from my cousin, Miss Pringle, and beg to congratulate you on the event. We understand that Mr Badsley is a wealthy English stranger, and the marriage will be a pleasant and desirable arrangement for you. Again I congratulate you, and wish you all possible happiness.'

'I am greatly obliged by your kind wishes, Miss Balchristie,' responded Ailie. 'There is, I believe, always a chance of unhappiness in marriage, but I hope for the best, and at least will try to do my duty in my new condition of life.'

'No fears, no fears of that,' said Augusta. 'May I ask you when the marriage is to take place, and who is to be Mr Badsley's best-man?'

Ailie answered that the marriage would be in about ten days, and the best-man was to be a Mr Pickerton, who, she understood, was acquainted with Mrs and the Misses Balchristie. She could not say she knew him personally.

'I know whom you mean,' observed Augusta. 'It is our old acquaintance, Jack Pickerton. We have never been particularly intimate with him ;

but he is well connected, and has been at some of our kettledrums, with or without his sister, Miss Adelaide Pickerton, who is a very agreeable person, and of great musical talents. You will be pleased with Jack, when you come to know him. He possesses none of the vulgar attribute of intelligence, and his nonsense is peculiarly delightful. Is it settled who are to be your bridesmaids ?

‘I must tell you,’ replied Ailie, ‘that the marriage is to be very quietly gone about—no show or crowd of people ; only a few relatives and friends to be present. As for bridesmaids, I purpose having two of my sisters ; and for a third, my esteemed friend, your cousin, Miss Pringle.’

‘There ought to be four at least, Miss Gilroy ; four is a common number. You must name some one else, to make a fourth.’

‘I did not think of that,’ answered Ailie ; ‘and I do not know whom to ask. I must just be contented with three.’

‘Not at all,’ said Augusta ; ‘think of the position you are going to occupy in society. You must have four bridesmaids, by all means ; and, if you have no objections, I will be the fourth.’

‘You ! you, Miss Augusta !’ replied Ailie. ‘I never could have asked such a thing. You should understand that the marriage is to take place in

my mother's house, which is situated at the top of a common stair. Your offer is exceedingly kind; but you cannot have known about the stair.'

'A fig for the stair!' said Augusta briskly. 'I may surely go where Jack Pickerton is to take part in a ceremonial. He is connected with the best blood in Banffshire and Midlothian. So, do not let the stair trouble you. It will be such capital fun, my meeting with Jack at your marriage. Is the thing settled?'

'If you will have it so,' answered Ailie in her kindly manner, 'I shall have no objections, but, on the contrary, feel honoured by your being one of my bridesmaids. Only, you need not be very particular about dress; plain white muslin will do.'

And so it was settled that Miss Augusta was to be a bridesmaid to Ailie—an office which no one could have expected to be filled by the young lady who had performed the part of Diana of Poitiers, and who seemed to be dying from the effects of a northern climate. If there be anything to be wondered at, it can be explained by a reference to the Pickertons.

As the younger son of rather a poor baronet, Jack had to go into the world for a livelihood; but being somewhat lymphatic, besides being far

from mentally brilliant, he was put to an agreeable and gentlemanly profession befitting his capacity and rank. It was that of a wine-touter. Endowed with an infinitesimally small share in a well-going wholesale wine concern, he retained the character of a gentleman at large, dressed as a sportsman, and became an acceptable guest at the tables of those parvenus, who, on an understanding, gave orders to stock their cellars, in exchange for introductions to the aristocratic circles in which Jack habitually moved. Such was the happy and easily exercised function of Jack Pickerton. He shot with friends over the best moors ; bagged orders for claret while he bagged braces of grouse ; hunted foxes when hunting for customers ; and while sustaining in the eye of the world the character of a good-natured idler, he was as effectually carrying on the business of a wine-merchant as if he had been selling bottles over the counter.

Nevertheless, as Jack put on no outward insignia of commerce, was well connected, talked pleasantly of shootings, the prospect of birds on the twelfth, the flavour of wines, the merits of particular vintages, and other allowable topics, he escaped the charge of being a muff, which exemption was distinctly recognised by the Balchristies.

Though doing a fair share of business, Jack was always under the agreeable impression that he had nothing whatever to do with trade. In this respect, he scarcely did himself justice. Rambling about, he was able to exercise a kindred professional resource to that of wine-touting. This consisted in touting for a life-assurance society, and it was exclusively in reference to this department of affairs that he had sought the acquaintanceship of the Great Miner, about whom he hung in the expectation of getting him to effect a policy. Badsley, on the other hand, thought he could make some use of Jack. At the very least, it looked well to be seen conversing with him in Princes Street, and as a thing that might yield some amusement, he induced him to perform the part of best-man at his wedding.

So much for that once universal favourite and useful member of society, Jack Pickerton. Let us now accompany Ailie in her final farewell visit. It was to a very old friend of the Gilroys. This was the aged and venerable Dr Macgleish. At the outset of his life he had practised as a surgeon, and hence his titular designation. His practice, however, was not attended with any great success; and it was fortunate for him that, at the death of his father, he became the proprietor of a cluster of

tall, semi-decayed tenements in the West Port, sufficient, with good management, to yield an income adequate for his moderate wants. The doctor now gave up his professional pursuits, which were little better than nominal, and assuming the dignified position of a landlord, had the agreeable occupation of squabbling with a poor class of tenants from year's end to year's end, about arrears of rent, broken windows, and every variety of dilapidation, even to the length of having sometimes to challenge the tearing up of floors and carrying away of doors, for firewood.

It was well for the doctor that he was of a placid temperament, otherwise he must have been driven out of his senses in a twelvemonth. Growing up as a bachelor with recluse and eccentric habits, he became a collector of 'antiquities,' a class of objects which, with his simple credulous nature and whimsical fancies, was more than usually comprehensive. To shew these antiquities to his friends, was a source of continual amusement, and encouraged by the approbation of visitors, he almost filled his house with a collection of things of the most heterogeneous description.

Dr Macgleish's residence was a mansion of two stories, situated amidst a group of old buildings of plain appearance in the hollow ground immediately

west from the castle, the whole of which are now removed. Some persons would not have greatly relished the view from the doctor's small windows. It was towards St Cuthbert's churchyard, embracing lines of tombstones, and ivy-covered walls which inclosed family burial-places. In one of these pleasant inclosures lay the Macgleishes for hundreds of years—an old clan of ecclesiastical origin, as the doctor used learnedly to aver; and he, as their living representative, took care to have everything ready for the accommodation of himself and of a few chosen friends.

When Ailie, in her girlhood, visited the doctor with complimentary messages from her mother, carrying with her, perhaps, a pot of gooseberry jam, she was uniformly treated to a view of the antiquities, although, to tell the truth, the exhibition was not greatly to her taste. On her arrival to announce her approaching marriage, she was received with uncommon benignity, but could scarcely make her way through the room into which she was ushered. The floor, chairs, and tables were piled with an extraordinary variety of articles, such as old earthen jars, iron pots, spurs, epaulets, boxes, helmets, and monstrosities; one of the most cherished objects being the skin of a stuffed calf with two heads.

‘Come in, Ailie; I am glad, very glad, to see you,’ said old Macgleish, as she presented herself. ‘Come in and sit down. I hope you’ll find room. I have just been buying a rigmaree, and it is a very fine one. It was found by some children below some rocks at the Wells o’ Weary, and I consider my collection to be immensely enriched by it. I have been looking about for a rigmaree for the last ten years.’

Addressing the doctor, who was in high spirits at this new acquisition, Ailie said, good humouredly: ‘I am sorry I do not know what a rigmaree is, and would like to be informed on the subject. I certainly have heard of a rigmarole, but that is not the thing, I suppose, which is meant.’

‘My dear Ailie,’ replied the doctor, ‘the world is full of ignorance, and I am not surprised that you never heard of a rigmaree. It gives me great happiness to tell you that a rigmaree is the vulgar name for a curious old coin of the reign of that ill-used woman, Mary Queen of Scots. It gets this name from the abbreviation, Reg. Marie, on the coin. It is worth ten times its weight in gold; for it is scarce, scarce, very scarce. Look, see, here it is.’

Ailie having expressed the great interest she

felt in seeing a rigmaree, endeavoured to make her way through the collection ; at length securing a seat beyond the calf with two heads, while the doctor, by various dislodgments, seated himself on the top of an old chest near her. She then, in a timid, hesitating manner, stated the object of her visit. It was to bid him good-bye previous to her marriage with an English gentleman of wealth and distinction, with whom she hoped to be happy. The doctor, who had been a friend to the family, would be pleased to hear that she was to be so agreeably settled.

‘Pleased ! I am mair than pleased, my dear Ailie,’ said he, with a face beaming with benevolence. ‘Marriage is honourable in all, and I am delighted that the daughter of an auld friend is about to enter into such an honourable condition. My blessings on ye, Ailie ; I wuss you weel.’

‘Thanks, many thanks, Doctor Macgleish. I am glad that my marriage meets with your approbation. It is a great matter to know I shall be very comfortably settled. I shall not need any longer to struggle for my daily bread.’

‘A great comfort, a great comfort,’ echoed the doctor. ‘It’s a fine thing to be weel settled in life. But there’s mair nor that to think o’. We maun a’ look to what is to come afterwards.’

‘Very true,’ said Ailie, with a suitable degree of solemnity.

‘Now,’ continued Dr Macgleish, his beneficence increasing in intensity, ‘I have been thinking for months back about making my will—for ye ken we are a’ life-like and death-like—and I have named you for a legacy.’

‘How kind of you, doctor!’ said Ailie. ‘I shall much esteem your legacy, though I hope it will be long before I benefit by it.’

‘Nobody can tell how that may be, Ailie,’ responded the doctor. ‘Life is very uncertain. It is always best to be secure. As to the legacy, I have not spoken of it to any one. It does not do to mention such things. From my great regard for you, however, and to put you at your ease, I will tell you what I have bequeathed to you.’ Here the doctor’s voice sunk greatly, and leaning forward, he whispered into her ear :

‘I have left you a lair!’

Having made this important communication, he gave a nod, accompanied by a significant look, expecting some sort of exclamation of gratitude. Ailie was puzzled. A lair! The word might be a good enough word, but it was new to her. It had never come in her way. It might signify a sum of money, or a house, or some object of

antiquity, like the rigmaree, or anything. A lair ! It was beyond her comprehension. Staring for a few moments in the doctor's countenance, she at length broke silence.

'I beg your pardon, doctor ; did you say a lair ? I am afraid I did not hear you rightly.'

'Yes, my good Ailie,' answered Macgleish with renewed expressions of benevolence. 'What I mean is a place in which to be laid after your decease. The lair is to be in my own family burying-ground. It is by far the bonniest bit in St Cuthbert's churchyard. It is situated on a beautiful high and dry part of the ground, which you can see from the Lothian Road. The sun shines on it all the year round. Many one would give hundreds of pounds for such a nice burial-place. It is prettily surrounded by a wall covered with ivy of the brightest green, in which the sparrows are chirruping and twittering all the day long. At night, there is a public gas-lamp lighted, high above the inclosure ; so that any one buried there is sure of having a cheery light thrown on his grave even in the darkest night of the year. That is a great privilege, Ailie, when compared with lying in dark corners of the burying-ground among the hemlocks and nettles, and not a bird to whistle or sing their bits o' sangs near them. Now, my dear,

that is what I design to leave you—a lair in that singularly pleasant spot. You are to lie very near to the gas-lamp, and I shall be about three feet from you on the right-hand side.'

'How very considerate you are, doctor!' said Ailie faintly.

'Certainly, my dear, I have thought a good deal about it. Some people would be giving you presents of a worthless kind on the occasion of your marriage, such as articles of gold and silver, dressing-cases, and such idle vanities; but, to shew my respect, I offer you something far better. My marriage-gift to you is a genteel burial-place, where you will lie undisturbed in good company as long as time endures.'

'It is very good of you, doctor,' said Ailie; 'but you know that, as a married woman, it may be my fate to be buried with my husband. I believe that is the usual practice.'

'Yes, yes, Ailie, I know that,' rejoined the doctor; 'but I will make it all right. We'll make room for him, Ailie; we'll make room. We'll lie the closer. And ye'll be amang kenn'd friends. I intend to leave the same sort o' legacy, provided there is room, to that excellent young man, Frank Lorimer, who takes a great interest in my antiquities. We'll be all as cosy as can

be, and the single gas-lamp will serve for the hale o' us.'

Ailie perceived the hopelessness of pursuing the conversation. She did not come with the expectation of being offered a present, and would have been pleased simply to bid the aged man farewell. The allusion to her burial-place was, she thought, a little awkward in present circumstances. Thanking the doctor, however, for the excellent provision he was making for her interment, she respectfully took her departure.

CHAPTER XII.

A MARRIAGE, AND A HONEYMOON EXCURSION.

THE great event which, according to Mrs Gilroy, had been prognosticated by the happy omen of the white dove, was now about to take place, and considerable was the commotion in the dwelling at the top of the common stair to which we have already made some reference. The news of the coming event had not been widely spread. Mr Badsley insisted on making the affair as little known as possible. He hated everything like fuss. Only a few friends should be invited to the wedding. His own rich relations in Worcestershire might not be pleased by being left out of view on the occasion ; but he was independent of them, and was indifferent as regards their opinion of the alliance which he was about to contract.

Various circumstances led the Gilroys to concur in the wish to make no particular parade at the

marriage ceremonial. Elated as they nearly all were, they made few aware of what was about to happen. Some of their more intimate acquaintances never heard of the marriage till it was over. Among others kept in this degree of ignorance were Frank Lorimer and Bob Cameron. Both thought highly of Ailie. Frank's esteem for her amounted to impassioned admiration. The intelligence of her marriage with Badsley, therefore, as we shall immediately see, left him to perform the unenviable part of the mourning lover in the little domestic drama which it has been our fortune to record.

During the brief space of time that elapsed previous to her union, Ailie was gay without being happy. Though about to fulfil a promise extorted from her by means wholly unwarrantable, it cannot be said that she entertained any reluctance to proceed with the nuptial ceremony. She did not resent the stratagem that had been employed, because she did not doubt the sincerity of Badsley's affection. It was love for her that had driven him to extremity, almost to madness. Such was the belief of the too credulous Ailie.

Other circumstances contributed to her acquiescence in the proposed union. From recent experiences, she was under the pleasing impression

that the Great Miner possessed some estimable points of character, on which she might rely. Then, she had the assurance of her relatives that the match was every way eligible. There is such a thing as being talked into a liking for either man or woman. In the present case, we have the spectacle of Ailie being talked into a liking for Badsley, which, with some leaning in her own mind in the same direction, compensated, for all practical purposes, the deficiency of heart-felt affection. Nor are we to forget that she was kept in such a mental whirl in making complimentary calls, and preparing dresses, that she never had time seriously to think of the heavy obligation she was about to undertake, or what might be its consequences. She was too busily occupied in preparing herself as a victim for the altar, to estimate the nature of the sacrifice.

Whether by accident or an effort of the will, Ailie, at this juncture, cast no retrospective glance to the valentine or its presumed writer. Any tendency to think of Frank was obliterated by a consideration of her engagement with Badsley. Conscious that she had broken no pledge, ill-used no suitor, and looking hopefully to the future, she was, if not elevated to happiness, at least under a conviction that she was acting honourably and

prudently in the circumstances. That she had ill-used no suitor is quite true. The only person whom she was treating ill was herself.

Ailie's marriage, as is customary in Scotland, took place in the parental home of the bride, after due proclamation of banns. It was neither a grand wedding, nor' a wedding noted for festivity. Besides the bridesmaids and best-man, there were few beyond the family circle present. Aunt Tolmie had been invited, but the long stair presented insuperable difficulties, and she could only send her good wishes. Modest as were the arrangements, they tasked the ingenuity of Bessie. Her mind, however, rose to the occasion. Eppie Britherstanes acted as door-keeper, being for the purpose equipped in an old silk dress and head-gear of Mrs Gilroy. Hutchison, by order, furnished the bride-cake, which Bessie took care to set out on a side-table, along with some slight refreshments, and knives and forks ready for action, before any of the guests made their appearance.

The circumstance of the Great Miner not inviting any one to be present but Jack Pickerton, was a little incomprehensible.

'Rather curious,' observed Dugald on the day of the marriage, 'that a man who has so many

grand relations does not let us see some of them.'

'Not curious at all,' responded Bessie. 'I dare say he would not like to bring ony o' his grand English friends to a house at the top o' a common stair. We are better without them. They would only have been a bother.'

'Ay, ay, Bessie,' struck in the mother. 'Grand folk would have been an awfu' trouble in this sma' house o' ours. Nae fears o' our managing a' things nicely by ourself.—But there's the door-bell. It will be the minister. Let us a' sit down quietly.'

It was not the minister, but the bridegroom and his friend Jack Pickerton, who were slowly ascending the stair. Another ring at the bell signalled the arrival of Miss Pringle, and her cousin, Augusta Balchristie. The Rev. Dr Twethel, who was to solemnise the marriage, came last.

There is a moment of painful suspense at such ceremonies. It is when the guests are waiting for the entrance of the bride. In the bedroom where the white dove had made its appearance, Ailie was dressed for a solemnity which, till the last moment of her existence, she reverted to with feelings akin to horror. Tastefully was she decorated by her sisters. Her slender and elegant form was chastely draped in white muslin; round

her head was wound a wreath of orange blossom ; at her side was suspended the antique gold watch which had been presented to her by Aunt Tolmie ; and over her head and dependent glossy curls was loosely thrown the usual white filmy veil of a bride. Never did this emblem of maiden purity grace one more worthy of love and admiration.

Led in by her eldest brother, Joseph, and followed by her train of bridesmaids, Ailie placed herself composedly by the side of the bridegroom. A short prayer, an address, the joining of hands, and the benediction—and all was over. The confiding and victimised girl was saluted and congratulated by all present as Mrs Badsley. The sacrifice of herself was effected.

After a solemnity of this kind usually comes some festive indulgence. But much depends on the minister. If, when the serious part of the business is over, and when the cake and glasses are making their rounds, the clergyman, with becoming geniality, ventures on one or two jokes, no matter how stale, there ensues a burst of merriment ; for when a minister in Scotland is jocular, all the world may conscientiously indulge in the privilege of laughing. The standard drollery for a minister at a marriage, when he wishes to put the company in good-humour, consists in asking

the bride two questions, which, after a momentary pause, he answers himself :

‘Why should a wife be like a clock?—Because she should be regular in all her movements!’

‘Why should a wife not be like a clock?—Because she should not strike!’

Immense laughter all round, of course, at such a brilliantly humorous sally.

The Rev. Dr Twethel, a very worthy man, with a pale complexion, was above such frivolities ; but in all other respects he gave general satisfaction. Excepting that there was some flirting between Jack Pickerton and Augusta Balchristie, little was done in the way of levity. Nor was there even much talking of an ordinary kind. The Great Miner was gracious and condescending, but he failed to enliven the company with a relation of continental reminiscences, and did not once allude to the Treaty of Vienna. The only bit of fun on the occasion was perpetrated by Dugald, who, in honour of Ailie, had been coaxed to attend. Encouraged by hints from his mother and his eldest sister, Henny, he told the story of the laddie who was cheated out of his prize of a good fat sheep by the mountebank—at which narrative the usually pococurante countenance of Dr Twethel suffered a complimentary relaxation.

However restrained, it is a poor marriage which does not yield at least some outward token of bright hopes of the future.

‘When we cam in by Glasco town,
We were a comely sicht to see;
My love was clad in velvet fine,
And I mysel in cramasie.’

Such, as we learn, were the external demonstrations of the unhappy pair celebrated in the ballad of *O waly, waly!* at the outset of a matrimonial career, in which the unfortunate wife had reason to say:

‘I leant my back unto an aik,
I thought it was a trusty tree;
But first it bowed, an’ syne it brak,
And so did my fause love to me.’

Ailie might almost from first to last have sung the mournful ditty in application to herself. She had one day of sunshine in the heart, along with an exterior appearance which seemed to bespeak a fair share of future happiness. Badsley protested on principle against the folly of honeymoon excursions. Such journeys, he said, were irrational. Man and wife should begin as they intended to continue their life, in a quiet decorous manner, and not run away in an excited state to live for a time

in a series of hotels, and to get looked at and laughed at by a number of waiters and chambermaids.

Docile as Ailie was, she ventured to express a wish that, for the sake of appearances, they might at anyrate set out in a post-chaise, and go the length of Roslin, as a small and allowable marriage jaunt. In her desire for the chaise, she was sustained by the opinion of her sisters, who, having accumulated a considerable quantity of old shoes, pumps, and slippers, were anxious to enjoy the satisfaction of showering them into the conveyance, as it drove off with the newly married pair.

The Great Miner could not gainsay this modified arrangement. He agreed to Roslin and the post-chaise, as a compromise for an ordinary honeymoon expedition. The appearance of the conveyance at the door, caused certainly some sensation in the quiet cross street. By a kind of electric intelligence, the neighbours rushed to their respective windows; a crowd of clamorous youngsters assembled in the expectation of a handful of halfpence being thrown amongst them; and the poor woman who sold greens and other vegetables in the area on the opposite side of the street, with an enlightened degree of foresight, was on the

watch for the volleys of old shoes, in the hope of picking up something useful for her children.

Modestly equipped for her short excursion, and with the gray cloak gifted to her by Aunt Tolmie, she placidly bade farewell to relations and friends. Only for a moment did her emotion become visible. It was when she was tenderly kissed and blessed by her mother, and went forth on the voyage of life with the man who was now her husband. At departure, the excitement was at its height, and the chaise disappeared round the corner amidst a general cheer from the youthful bystanders.

The stillness which succeeded in the household permitted Mrs Gilroy to look around complacently, and utter the remark, 'that now all which could be expected from the wonderful omen of the white dove on the window-sole, had been amply realised. Ailie had got a marriage far beyond what any one could have looked for; and the visit of that dove was never to be forgotten—never.'

In driving across St Andrew Square, and along the busy line of thoroughfare to the south, Ailie was, as will be believed, somewhat elated. To ride off as a newly married wife with her husband, is a triumph which many sigh for as the summit of feminine ambition. The desire for this measure of exaltation is harmless and excusable. Marriage

is an honourable, and usually is an honoured condition. It is the end of many fond hopes, fears, expectations. The future is shaped out. What is to ensue will be all right, no doubt. At all events, if there be anything to embarrass, there will be one at hand to look to, to cling to, and to relieve the difficulty. Ailie, perhaps, participated in this hopeful mode of reasoning. She was now starting in a partnership of life-long endurance. She was no longer, as she thought, to be a dependent, isolated being. Her partner, able to encounter the world, was to be her succour, her ally against every adversary. All she had to do was cheerfully to render love, respect, and all reasonable obedience in return.

Mr Badsley being a comparative stranger to the district, Ailie spoke pleasantly to him of the places on the wayside they were passing; for in her picnic expeditions, Bob Cameron had given her an account of some of the historical events connected with the localities—as, for example, the Braid Hills on the right, on which the army of the unfortunate James IV. encamped previous to marching to Flodden; and the Balm Well at St Catherine's on the left, to which devotional pilgrimages on the score of health took place previous to the Reformation. At Roslin, where they rested

and were to stay for the night, she did her best to point out the spots most interesting to visitors.

To her surprise, Badsley, whom she had taken to be of cultivated understanding, seemed to care little for the beauty of the scenery, its historical associations, or objects of antiquity. The season was late in the autumn, when the tints which variegate the picturesque valley of the Esk were still at their brightest. In the midst of the beauteous dell was Roslin Castle ; and above it, on a projecting knoll, Roslin Chapel, as it is called—a fragment, but a gem not to be equalled in the ornate style of ecclesiastical architecture, which has come down to us from the olden time. Where can any one find so much to satisfy the more enlightened sentiments ?

Badsley did not enter into the merits of this delightful locality. Occasionally he unbended, and permitted a smile to come over his ordinarily sombre countenance. It would have been cruel not to smile on his marriage day. He therefore did smile, and seem interested at times ; and when he liked, and it suited his purpose, he could put on a most winning and highly intellectual expression. But after these gleams of sunshine, there came clouds, dark and impenetrable.

Trying to feel happy, Ailie was not quite at her ease.

‘And there’s the ‘Prentice Pillar,’ said Ailie, pointing out what is usually considered the most beautifully sculptured part of the old chapel.

‘Pooh!’ replied the Great Miner. ‘There is a ‘Prentice Pillar, as the vulgar superstition has it, in Strasburg Cathedral, and I cannot tell you how many other old churches.’

Ailie was taken aback at this rebuff. She had innocently believed there was only one ‘Prentice Pillar in the world, and that was at Roslin. However, she ventured on one other remark.

‘But is not the whole building, with its pillars and arches, very pretty; and is not the carving very beautiful?’

‘Well, my dear,’ responded Mr Badsley, ‘I will not deny that there is something to admire; but the whole thing is a trifle. What is it to Notre Dame, or the grand structures in Normandy, or to Westminster Abbey, or to fifty other old churches? Let us, if you please, get into the open air. The place is dull, damp, and stifling.’

Ailie was disconcerted. With a taste for drawing and perspective, and with agreeable associations concerning Roslin, she was surprised at the indifference of the man to whom she was now

indissolubly united. The excuse which she made for him in her own mind savoured of the simple and charitable feeling for which she was noted, and partly bore on the truth.

‘He knows so much, and has seen so much, that he does not care about anything that I can either tell him or shew him.’

The Great Miner had, no doubt, seen a good deal of the world, and his reading, if not choice, had been extensive. He was in a sense ‘used up’—a condition of things which young ladies may generally expect who ally themselves to men considerably older than themselves. We qualify the observation by ‘generally,’ because there happen to be notable and gratifying exceptions. And let us say that it is always a mark of a peevish and discontented spirit to affect to be above being pleased with what is in itself harmless, and which communicates joyous feelings to others. What though a man may have seen the falls of Niagara, why should he turn with disdain from the foaming mountain torrent? He may have been entranced with the spectacle of St Peter’s, in all the majesty of its vast interior; but is that a reason for looking contemptuously on a small country church? A truly great mind sees something to admire in the minute as well as the grand, whether in nature or

art—the glory of the heavens and the speckled wing of a humble butterfly !

Used up the Great Miner might be ; but the source of his ill-natured remarks was in his own bosom. He was, evidently, not at peace with himself. There was that species of conscious wrongdoing which tends to cloud the brow, and sends a pang through the heart. His cheerfulness was only a momentary gleam, and when the gleam was over, he could do no less than relapse into a state of chronic discontent.

Returning to the little inn at Roslin to which they had been driven on arrival, Oughten, the landlord, who had shewn them over the chapel, did all in his power to make them comfortable. The rooms were not large, nor were they so lofty as in modern hotels ; but they were scrupulously clean. The sitting apartment into which the newly married pair were ushered, and where they dined and took tea, had at one side a pianoforte, which Oughten explained had been put in order for a lady who had lately resided for a few weeks in the house, and he hoped that it was still in tune, if Mrs Badsley would like to try it.

The mention of the piano threw the Great Miner into a state of placidity and good-humour. The cloud had passed away ; and had a fitting

audience presented itself, he might possibly have plunged into one of his harangues about foreign commerce and the Treaty of Vienna.

'Hollo, Ailie, dear!' said he merrily; 'now for a tune and a song. I should have preferred to hear you on the guitar, but that is not at hand. We'll make the best of the piano. So sit down, like a good girl, and let us have anything musical that you like.'

Ever ready to oblige, Ailie sat down to the piano, and ran her fingers over the keys. One or two notes were out of tune, and the whole were somewhat thin and wiry; but the instrument would do well enough to accompany any simple melody.

'I do not know what to sing,' said Ailie. 'Would you like *Meet me by Moonlight alone*?'

'No. Have you anything else?'

'I could give you *We met, 'twas in a Crowd*. That is at present a very fashionable song.'

'Rather a namby-pamby affair, that,' said Badsley.

'Would you like me to sing *In happier days*? It is another fashionable song.'

'I should prefer something fresh—something I have not heard.'

'The only new thing I remember,' rejoined Ailie, whose stock of songs was not very extensive,

'is a song not yet in print, written by a young gentleman of our acquaintance, who went out on some business to Malta. Before he went away, he engaged himself to a pretty girl, who danced and sang beautifully. Their parting on the morning he left was, I am told, very affecting. They could not speak. She was a Miss Rowena Saville, but he used to call her Rowine. He had not been long gone, when one day she received by post the song he had written about her, and in which he called her by the pet name of Rowine. He was away about two years. When he came home, he married Rowine; and they are now living happily in one of the pleasant suburbs of London.'

'Oh, let us hear the song of Rowine, by all means,' said the Great Miner, in his happiest mood, and stretching himself leisurely on a chintz-covered sofa in a corner of the apartment. 'You know the air, of course?'

Ailie explained that the air was that which Felix Mendelssohn had composed for *O wert thou in the Cauld Blast*; the versification being in the style employed by Burns in that exquisite lyric. She then sang the following verses, which she gave with as good effect as the nature of the accompaniment permitted.

TO ROWINE.

The last embrace, the parting glance,
 In memory dwell, in memory dwell ;
 The pang too great for tongue to speak,
 We sighed farewell, we sighed farewell.

Now far away in southern clime,
 I've no delight, I've no delight ;
 For thou'rt not near, with 'witching form,
 To charm my sight, to charm my sight.

This joyous scene, these azure skies,
 Are lost on me, are lost on me ;
 What's all the joy the world can give,
 If I've not thee, if I've not thee?

How slowly speed the wearying hours,
 With nought the while, with nought the while,
 But hopes that I shall yet return,
 To meet thy smile, to meet thy smile !

Yon star serene, at gloaming hour,
 So sweetly shone, so sweetly shone,
 In presage of the coming day,
 When we'll be one, when we'll be one !

Then, free to join in blissful band,
 And call thee mine, and call thee mine,
 I'll fondly clasp thy loving hand,
 My dear Rowine, my dear Rowine.

'Charmingly sung, Ailie!' shouted the Great Miner. 'You'll make an excellent wife ; and, with your guitar and pianoforte, we shall have many pleasant evenings.'

CHAPTER XIII.

A WIFE'S EXPERIENCES.

ON the morning after their marriage, Badsley and his young wife drove home to Portobello by Craigmillar and Duddingston, and were received in a plain unceremonious way by Jenny Barry, who soon let it be known that she was glad to be under orders in a regularly constituted manner. To Ailie she had become much attached, and in her homely manner would have done anything to serve her. The three step-children were to Jenny less interesting. She thought them, as she said, 'a wee dour, and not very innerly'—meaning that they were ungenial in temperament, and not inclined to attach themselves to any one; though, as Jenny observed, there was no fear of them improving under the mild discipline of their step-mother. Ailie, too, felt that kindness, accompanied by firmness, might work wonders on their

disposition, and was resolved to use towards them all the beneficial influences in her power.

Settling quietly down as a wife in Hawthorn Villa, Tower Street, Ailie could not fail to recollect the many magnificent promises which had been held out by the Great Miner, when persuading her to marry him. Of not one of these promises was anything now said.

Badsley had spoken of his great aristocratic connections in Worcestershire, and of the estate and fine old manor-house which would probably soon be in his possession—of the style in which Ailie would live as a lady of fortune, and the fashionable circle to which she would be introduced—of how she should travel with him through various continental countries, seeing the finest pictures and galleries of art from the Hague to Paris, and Paris to Rome—she was to be amused by dining at the *table-d'hôtes* in the best hotels—she was to give herself no concern about speaking the continental languages, for his proficiency as a linguist would everywhere smooth her way—he was to be happy in uniting with her to carry out acts of charity and mercy. Of all this, and much more, there was not now a single word.

The interests of the Gilroy family were also

strangely lost sight of. No application in favour of Tom was made to the governor and directors of the Bank of England. Joseph continued to drudge at an early stage in his professional career at Aberdeen; he was not invited to take holy orders under the auspices of the venerable Lord Bishop of Ely, and thereafter to be installed in the pleasant rectory of Badsley-cum-Bampton. Dugald was not so much as asked if he had a taste for the coal-trade, and would like to have fifteen hundred a year; which no doubt he would have liked very much, particularly as it was to be only a beginning, with a handsome fortune in prospect.

If a neglect on these and some other points was disconcerting to Ailie, her mother and sisters were not less mortified that so little external change was produced in the domestic affairs of the Great Miner. His mode of living seemed no way different. Jenny Barry continued to be the only servant in the dwelling. No carriages or horses were kept. There was no shopping in the grand style which had been confidently anticipated. To all appearance, Ailie was not a whit better off than she was before, with the additional embarrassment of being a wife. Very curious, all that, thought the mother and daughters. Yet, Mrs Gilroy did not think there was any cause for

uneasiness. Her reliance on the favourable augury of the white dove remained unshaken.

‘It will a’ come richt at last,’ said she to her family. ‘The Great Miner does not do things like other folk. He is a strong-minded man, and disna care about shewing off. There’s nae fear o’ Ailie being comfortable.’

‘But I tell you,’ said Dugald, ‘there is a fear. In my opinion, the Great Miner is a regular intake. No man, of such great wealth as he pretends to, would go so constantly with the omnibus. He would keep a carriage for himself, and not live in such a shabby, retired way.’

The mother did not rebut these sceptical views with the vigour she had formerly shewn; nor was the cashier now so very confident that his brother-in-law was in reality the proprietor of a coal-pit eight hundred feet deep. On the whole, according to the present aspect of affairs, the family was glad that so little parade had been made of Ailie’s marriage, and that so little publicity had been given to it.

‘Least said is soonest mended,’ said Henny.

‘It’s aye best to keep a calm sough,’ observed Bessie.

With these and similar proverbial consolations, the subject was in the meanwhile dropped. Of

what avail, indeed, would any formal declaration of disappointment now have been regarding Ailie's marriage. The deed was done. If evil, it was irrecoverable, and would have to be submitted to.

Ailie did not encourage the disconsolate views of her relatives. An intuitive sense of discretion led her to remain silent regarding the deceptive promises of Badsley. 'He was wrong,' she argued, 'to have held out such splendid hopes. But his conduct had not sprung from bad-heartedness. In his love for me, he had allowed his imagination to get the better of his judgment. At present, he seems to be much occupied with grave business matters ; and by-and-by, when more at leisure, he will perhaps indulge me with some of the continental trips he spoke of so eloquently.'

Ailie felt to a degree warranted in forming this lenient opinion of Badsley. She saw that he received a considerable number of letters by the post, and that he often was engaged for hours in studies over his papers, which, when going out, he always carefully locked up. Occasionally, he was absent for days, at Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow, and other places which he mentioned. The only explanation he offered regarding these excursions was, that he was engaged in various large mercantile transactions. 'Transactions' was a

favourite word with him. He had always some kind of 'transactions' on hand. If he went from home, it was on account of 'transactions.' If he sat up late looking over papers, or kept himself aloof from his family, it was all owing to the 'transactions' in which he was diligently engaged.

'I am afraid,' said Ailie to him one day, as if merely hinting what might be agreeable to her—'I am afraid we are not going to have any jaunt on the continent.'

'Quite impossible, my dear,' was the reply. 'At present, I have some heavy transactions on hand, and our continental excursion must be indefinitely postponed. Just make yourself comfortable at home, looking after the children, and so on.'

Ailie—the gentle, confiding Ailie—was simple, accommodating, and easily put off with excuses. She had not awakened to the character of the man with whom she was indissolubly united until the death of either severed the connection. As Badsley had not suggested any change in her routine of duties, she, although now a wife and a step-mother, continued to act as a governess; toiling daily as usual at teaching lessons, just as if her bread depended on her assiduity. In this, perhaps, some will think she was too submissive. But an opposite line of action would not have improved her position.

Some men marry for money, some to improve their prospects socially or professionally. Not many, we hope, marry from motives such as those which influenced Badsley. From the moment of his introduction to Ailie in the omnibus, he marked her out as his prey ; and the longer he knew her, he was the more confirmed in the belief that she was exactly the person who should pass as a slave under his domination. Nothing turned him aside from this deliberately formed design. Her poverty, her simplicity, her conscientiousness, her modest accomplishments, the weakness of her relatives, all pointed her out as one fully adapted to his purposes. It would be difficult to find out a case in which an innocent being was so effectually sacrificed to the Demon of Selfishness.

No man is said to be utterly bad. In the depths of the most depraved heart, there may lurk sentiments of goodness. The most vicious are at times dissolved in tears, when reflecting on the dreary hopelessness of their unfortunate condition ; as if sweet gales wafted from paradise served to stimulate the sighs of the repentant sinner. Badsley, as will have to be described, was almost as bad as bad can be ; but there was imbedded in his base nature a small particle of beneficence. As a widower, he felt for his children. Engaged in

'transactions,' which might any day deprive them of his fatherly care, he was earnestly solicitous, and at a convenient cost, to secure for them a mother's guidance and superintendence. It was no matter that the mother so to be supplemented should be consigned to life-long anguish, should be blighted in the budding years of her existence. That he cared nothing for. His ends would be served.

Ailie, in her gipsy straw bonnet and sweetly smiling countenance, happened to cast up as what was wanted. In the Portobello omnibus that day, Badsley as much as said to himself: 'Here is a simple girl with some lady-like accomplishments, whom I will first employ as a governess, and having got her so far into my power, I will pay my addresses to her, marry her, and fasten her down as a wife, housekeeper, governess, and permanent guardian of my children. What is to be her present rate of remuneration is of no consequence. I may be able to effect a marriage before the first half-year's salary becomes due. After that, I shall have her services at my command for next to nothing.'

It will be seen that, according to this economic view of affairs, Badsley looked on his marriage with Ailie in the light of a good bargain—we can

hardly say a good investment, for he invested nothing. After this manner did he reason.

‘There she is at my disposal, to keep my house, to educate my children, and to submit with all proper docility to my humours. A marvellously cheap bargain! I may do as I like. There is no one to call me to account. Her relations are a pack of simpletons, whom I can turn round my finger. Had they possessed one atom of intelligence, they would never have allowed her to accept a situation as a governess without suitable references or introductions. This primary blunder has made me master of the situation. Ailie has been willingly delivered up to me, and she and the whole of those who are interested in her must take the consequences.’ Reasoning in this unprincipled manner, so did he act. His selfishness being concerned, he had no more pity or remorse than the jungle tiger has when bounding upon and tearing its innocent victim in pieces.

Having accomplished his fell purpose in entrapping Ailie, by an assumed agreeableness of manner, by a tissue of falsehoods and fraudulent promises, by a hypocritical affectation of devotional sentiment, and by a skilful exhibition of genius and intelligence, the Great Miner was now comparatively at his ease. The prize he had

gained was worth ten times the trouble he had employed to secure it. Ailie being now his thrall, there was no longer a special necessity to conciliate her one way or other. He might play the tyrant or buffoon as suited his fancy.

His strength lay in her conscientious discharge of what she believed to be her duty as a wife. He well knew she was too pious to demur; too gentle to resent; too proud to complain; too upright in principle to seek to undo a contract into which she had solemnly and deliberately entered. That in these explanations we are doing no injustice to Badsley, is plain from his whole conduct, as well as from his unfortunate wife's subsequent and painful revelations.

Usually, a man, from the lowest motive by which any one can be influenced—that is, for his own sake, his own peace of mind—will endeavour to act with a becoming sense of justice and kindness towards the woman he has vowed to love and cherish. But this presupposes the possession of qualities of which the Great Miner was devoid. Petrified in feeling, he was impenetrable to any sense of justice; and to kindness to anything apart from his children, he was altogether unaccustomed.

In little more than a week after his marriage to

Ailie, the darker shades of his character began to be developed. Within the domestic circle, he was shewing himself to be a morose and domineering bashaw. Jenny Barry, in speaking to a neighbour, and referring to what she called his 'tirrievies' or gusts of bad temper, said 'he was just a causey saunt and house deevil;' meaning, that everything about him looked well on the street, but that when at home he was a torment to every one—and such was not a bad estimate of his character.

How difficult it was for Ailie to see by these revelations the extent or enormity of the deception that had been practised on her! Unwilling to think ill of any one, least of all her husband, she as long as possible shrouded from herself the moral shortcomings of Badsley. The first real shock she sustained arose from an unexpected circumstance.

Shortly after coming as a governess to the family of the Great Miner, she, at request of Jenny Barry, procured a young cat for the house. It was a pretty white creature, and was a favourite of the Gilroys, from having been a kitten of the huge white cat, called the 'soo,' which Dugald had so assiduously cultivated. As one of the progeny of the soo, the young cat, to which was given the name Beeny, was noted for its docility

and intelligence, and also for its remarkable acrobatic qualities. It became a pet with Ailie, as something that reminded her of kind hearts and happy evenings at home. The three daughters of Badsley likewise took a fancy to Beeny, and it was allowed to wander about on the table beside them, to sit on their shoulders, and to frequent their bedrooms.

In the course of things, Beeny had kittens, the whole of which were white like herself. All were at birth quietly removed and drowned, one alone excepted, which she nursed with uncommon affection and solicitude. What was to be done with this fresh and interesting descendant of the soo, had not been determined on when illness visited the dwelling. The youngest girl was struck down by a fever, which assumed a virulent type; and she lay nigh unto death. Attachment to his children, we have said, was a redeeming trait in the character of this extraordinary man. There, by the bed of the sick child, did he watch with Ailie for days, scarcely thinking of his own wants or business affairs.

It happened that, one night, the kitten, in its playfulness, visited the sick-chamber in what Badsley thought a troublesome way. Instead of quietly shutting it out, he, in a state of

ungovernable fury, seized the innocent little creature, and flung it with violence out of the room, injuring it so seriously that it languished for a few hours and died ; its mother tenderly watching over it till the last, and then taking the dead thing in its mouth, and disappearing from the house.

To Ailie, with her kindly nature and regard for the little animal, the cruelty that had been perpetrated was to the last degree painful. A great shock had been given to her feelings. The spectacle of the maimed little kitten, writhing in its dying agony, and faintly mewling its sense of pain ; of the mother licking it, and fondly but fruitlessly endeavouring to afford it succour ; of its death, and the mournful retreat of Beeny with it in her mouth, shook Ailie's nervous system—the more so that all arose from an act of unjustifiable violence by the man whom she had vowed to love and honour.

Her distress was more than she was able to bear unmoved. She retired to a small dressing-room, and sat down and wept bitterly. It was an hour before she could compose herself. To the depressing sensation experienced by her on this occasion, she, in after-years, reverted as to her first real sorrow, and as being a presage of what she might have to endure. She now to a certain

extent realised the coarse and heartless character of the man to whom, by her own act, she was bound by ties stronger than fetters of iron.

Brought up under a mother who was apt to interpret natural events as things of good or evil omen, Ailie was further agitated by a new and startling occurrence in the dwelling, of almost dramatic interest.

On the third night after the outrage on the poor kitten, Badsley and his young wife were seated by the bed-side of the dying girl. Medical skill had been exhausted in the ineffectual attempt to save her life. Hope was relinquished. She was not expected to live beyond midnight. Her heavy breathings, gradually growing weaker and weaker, were watched by the father with intense anxiety. The door of the apartment had been slightly set ajar for the admission of air, which gained entrance to the villa by a partially opened window on the ground floor.

As a flame flickering feebly in the socket, at length sinks and expires, so did the flame of existence in the child suddenly collapse. Her father, hanging over her, saw the last movement, and at once life was at an end. At that instant, giving a start, Ailie uttered an exclamation of surprise, which caused Badsley to turn round, and

ungovernable fury, seized the innocent little creature, and flung it with violence out of the room, injuring it so seriously that it languished for a few hours and died; its mother tenderly watching over it till the last, and then taking the dead thing in its mouth, and disappearing from the house.

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As a flickering feebly in the socket, at last, so did the flame of the lamp suddenly collapse. Her eyes saw the last movement, and then she died. At that instant, she uttered an exclamation of surprise, and then she turned round, and

look in the direction of the door. There, just advanced a little way into the room, stood Beeny, lank and miserable, with tail erect and wild flashing eyes, and, having uttered a single long wail, vanished like a sprite in the same mysterious way she had come. What Badsley thought of the phenomenon was unknown. But Ailie felt as if he had been visited by an avenging Nemesis, or, to put the matter in the words she described it, as if Beeny had come back to the house before departing for some more hospitable retreat, to say to the slayer of her much loved kitten :

‘Monster, you cruelly killed my child! See how God has punished you by taking away one of your own!’

Beeny was never more seen in Portobello. What became of her was unknown—a circumstance which contributed to the unhappiness of Ailie.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MOURNING LOVER.

OF all the female attractions which help to bias the affections of young men, none, as a general rule, is so effective as good temper. It is a quality which, in innumerable cases, goes much before either beauty or wealth, or even a considerable brightness of intelligence. Ailie Gilroy's imperturbable cheerfulness and good-nature were higher recommendations than her personal charms, great as these undoubtedly were, or than any quality purely intellectual. Her temper was not regulated by caprice. She was not in good-humour one day, and sulky the next, according as things happened to please or displease her. When seeming to be neglected, she did not indulge in the pleasure of thinking herself ill-used. Not imagining that any one desired to wrong her, she took no offence. To all who had the pleasure of

knowing her intimately, she was ever the same gentle and benign being, ready on all occasions to oblige, although it might be at some inconvenience to herself. Could any one help loving one who so much deserved to be loved?

With a capacity for discrimination, Frank Lorimer was not long in discovering and appreciating the amiability and other estimable qualities of Ailie. He, like some others, saw her first with guitar in hand in one of her professional visits to a neighbour. Having been introduced to her family, he, from less to more, became an admirer; but his admiration was not suffered to outrun his prudence, or what might properly be termed his sense of justice towards the young lady. Toiling obscurely, though honourably, at a profession in which he was not without hopes of ultimate success, he could as little think of asking her to share his humble home, as to dangle after her, and possibly raise expectations which might never be realised.

Considerate and upright in principle, he reprobated the character of a habitual dangler, by which is meant one who, from levity or fickleness, hangs like a blight over the fate of young women; by consuming their time, distracting their feelings, and probably preventing real and modest admirers from making suitable advances. In his dislike

of this species of trifler, he perhaps fell into the opposite error of being too shy and reserved, as well as of nourishing too great an anxiety concerning the future. But Frank had placed before himself certain noble aims, from which, in the meanwhile at least, he was resolved that nothing should divert him. The family to which he belonged had suffered painful reverses of fortune; and it was his fondly cherished hope to recover, by his exertions, the patrimony and the social position that had been forfeited by his parents, while he still was a child, scarcely conscious of the disasters which had robbed him of an ancient heritage.

Inspired by impulses of this nature, Frank had gone forth in the battle of life, submitting to privations, and making his way with an eagerness which no casual onlooker could well comprehend. In the secrecy of his own bosom was locked up his admiration of Ailie, and with a trustful anticipation that the time might come for him to pay his addresses to her, he, until that auspicious time arrived, took care to compromise neither her nor himself.

Such was Frank's line of policy. It may not have been one commonly pursued, but we are not the less to credit him with acting on motives the

most correct and praiseworthy. In singing the refrain of *O Poortith Cauld*, he in reality expressed his own feelings, making the lyric, as it were, to tell the story of his mental agitation. When, by the invitations of one or other of the Gilroys, he visited the family, he could not, with all his diffidence, refrain from paying Ailie such small and delicate attentions as gratified his own feelings, without bringing him under the category of a dangler. The hope never deserted him that Ailie, who was still very young, would not be hasty in engaging herself to any one, by which postponement he might enjoy an opportunity, a few years hence, of making her an offer of marriage.

Where are we to look for human consistency, especially when the affections are concerned? Punctiliously scrupulous as Frank ordinarily was, he did not on one occasion avoid the risk of disclosing his impassioned sentiments to the object of his regard. This was the freak of writing and sending to Ailie verses, under the guise of a valentine, which, as has been seen, raised so many bewildering conjectures respecting their authorship. The composition of the verses was a species of mental luxury, indulged in several months previous to despatching the verses on their mission.

One evening in autumn he ceased his irksome labours a little earlier than usual. Wandering about for an hour, and grateful for the unaccustomed recreation, he came at length to the wide open common known as Leith Links. The golfers were retiring from their play, and the gloaming was softly stealing over the scene. The time was attuned to poetical inspiration, and it was then that, thinking of Ailie, he conceived the idea of addressing her in verse. The greater number of the lines had been mentally constructed, when a change came over the landscape. A dark cloud rising in the south-west, and hovering over Arthur's Seat, spread around, and speedily dissolved in a fierce shower of rain. To seek shelter from the blast, he hurried into a bunk or sand-pit in the side of one of those high mounds which had been raised by the Lords of the Congregation, when, along with the forces of Elizabeth, they besieged the citadel of Leith in 1560. Here, under the superincumbent verge of the bunk, and seated on a mass of fallen turf, he, amidst the rattling of the storm, composed the concluding verse 'To Ailie,' being a kind of prayer for her preservation from those deceptions to which, unhappily, she fell a victim.

Frank's imprudence in writing and sending

the valentine was not particularly heinous. The mystery regarding the writer would have been cleared up in no great length of time, and in a way altogether satisfactory, but for Ailie's precipitate acceptance, under compulsion, of the offer of the Great Miner. That ruined all, and left the future a dreary blank, alike to the writer of the verses and the beloved one to whom they were addressed.

Improved in means, by some recent successful adventures in business, Frank thought he might call on the Gilroys, in the hope of hearing about Ailie. He was received kindly, but in a less boisterous manner than on former occasions. The family had begun to be apprehensive that all was not right with the Great Miner.

'I hope Miss Ailie is quite well?' said Frank; 'I suppose she is still at Mr Badsley's?'

'Miss Ailie, you say,' answered Henny. 'Do you not know that Ailie is married?'

'Married! Ailie married!'

'Yes, married—married to Mr Badsley.'

Frank's breath was almost taken away on hearing this wholly unexpected intelligence; for now were all his high hopes of being united to Ailie shattered at a blow. Not, however, being very demonstrative, he said with assumed calmness:

‘I never heard of her marriage till this moment. Surely, it was a very sudden affair.’

‘Yes, perhaps rather too sudden,’ said Lucy. ‘She engaged herself to the Great Miner, as he is called, before we knew anything about it. The truth is, Mr Badsley said he would shoot himself if she did not consent to marry him; and so, to prevent the horrible crime of suicide, she gave her consent.’

‘Very ridiculous, certainly,’ said Frank. ‘Of course, I have nothing to do with it, but my belief is, that no respectable man would have used such a cruel argument; and I shall not be surprised to find that Mr Badsley is not what he pretends to be.’

‘I am afraid you are right,’ said Lucy, lowering her voice to a whisper; ‘and it would be a good thing if we could really discover what is the true character of the Great Miner. Without saying much about it, perhaps you will try to get at the truth.’

Frank nodded assent. The hint given by Lucy coincided with his own feelings. It supported him in the notion that Ailie’s simplicity had been abused, and that it would be a meritorious act to discover and lay bare what he believed to be the fraudulent deceptions of Badsley. Under this

conviction, he sought and had an interview with Dugald, from whom he had reason to expect sympathy and assistance in his investigations. The inquiry they set on foot was carried on with a zest corresponding to Frank's disappointed anticipations. He was animated with an intense desire to rescue Ailie, though knowing that all hopes of a union with her were now at an end. And in nothing could he have more clearly shewn the depth of the affection he had entertained for this amiable and misused being.

'Do you,' said Frank to Dugald—'do you recollect a pleasant picnic excursion which a number of us had, about two years ago, to Lasswade? Your sister Bessie was one of the party.'

'I remember it well,' replied Dugald. 'We had strawberries and cream at the cottage of a gardener. Bessie, I think, afterwards made tea, which we had in an arbour in the garden. There was a great deal of laughing and singing.'

'Just so,' rejoined Frank. 'The gardener's name was Sandy Pergivie, and he had a daughter, Bell, who was amazingly active on the occasion. I remember all that, and that Sandy told us he had a number of years ago been gardener to a gentleman near Sunderland. Now, I wish you to walk with me to Lasswade to make some

inquiries at this old gardener. He may have heard something of the Great Miner, who is said to have various possessions in Durham and Northumberland.'

Dugald brightened at the suggestion. Next Saturday afternoon was devoted to the expedition. On arriving at the pretty dell, a short way from Lasswade, where the picnic party had held their strawberry revel, the two youthful pedestrians, to their extreme mortification, found that Sandy Per-givie and his daughter, Bell, had quitted the place more than a year ago. They learned, however, that he had gone to reside at Easter Duddingston, and that he was still alive ; he doing some work at gentlemen's gardens in the vicinity, and Bell contributing to his maintenance by acting as a sempstress.

In a week afterwards, Frank and Dugald were at Easter Duddingston, in quest of the gardener and his daughter. They were easily discovered, and readily answered the questions put to them. The answers at first were unsatisfactory. Sandy had never, in his north-of-England experiences, heard anything of a Mr Badsley.

'Did you ever,' inquired Frank, 'hear of any remarkable case of fraud or deception, when working as a gardener in Durham or Northumberland

—any gentleman, for instance, disreputably running away in debt?’

‘Ou ay,’ replied Sandy; ‘I see where ye’re at now. I mind o’ a strange case of a gentleman hiring a large furnished house, called Beaumont Hall, a few miles from Sunderland, near the place where I was gardener. His wife died, leaving him with some young children; and the folk about were very sorry for him. But in less than a year, he and his family gaed off suddenly, in debt to everybody, and forgot to pay the rent o’ the house and grounds.’

‘What was his name?’

‘Ah, ye’ve fickleed me now. I canna mind his name.’

‘Try to remember. Perhaps your daughter may assist your memory.’

With the assistance of Bell, the name was at length remembered. It was Frederick Adolphus Stanley—‘a very grand name,’ as they thought.

‘And do you know,’ asked Frank, ‘where this gentleman with the grand name is now?’

‘Me! I ken naething about him,’ replied Sandy; ‘nor does anybody else. He clean vanished, and was never mair heard o’. Some people thought he fled to Hamburg.’

‘Would you know him, if you saw him?’

Sandy was uncertain as to knowing the gentleman. He had seen him only once or twice, and that was several years ago; and his memory was beginning to fail.

Although there was little to found upon, Frank felt almost assured that he had alighted on the track of the Great Miner. There could be little doubt, he thought, that Stanley and Badsley were the same individual. What was now wanted was to bring about an interview with Sandy Pergivie, with a view to identification. But how was this to be accomplished? The matter was taken in hand by Dugald. He was to induce Ailie to visit the old gardener's humble cottage, on the plea of seeing Bell for some sempstress purposes; if possible, taking Badsley with her.

The manœuvre was somewhat difficult. Ailie's confidence in, and respect for, the Great Miner had been considerably shaken; but her sense of duty as a wife to her husband was strong, and she was disinclined to aid in any way as suggested. Dugald, however, made strong representations on the subject. He shewed that her own reputation might be compromised; that personal infamy and lasting distress of mind might be her lot.

'But, Dugald,' said she, 'should we not speak to my mother before doing anything in the business?'

‘Not at all,’ replied Dugald firmly. ‘We must say nothing in the meanwhile to her on the subject. She would only begin about the white dove, and probably oppose any attempt to unravel the mystery of the Great Miner. You must, for once, trust to yourself; and I beg you, for all our sakes, to do so.’

After a distressing mental struggle, Ailie gave her assent to the proposal.

One day, when the Great Miner came home more early than was his wont, and happened to be in a placable mood, Ailie asked him to accompany her on a little excursion, on which, from her condition, she had been meditating.

‘I should like,’ said she, ‘if you would escort me in a walk to Easter Duddingston. I wish to see a girl there about sewing some things for me that I shall soon require. I am told she is an excellent sempstress, and very obliging.’

The appeal could not be rejected. Putting on one of his theatrical airs, Badsley offered his arm; and the pair walked away in the direction of the village, or more properly hamlet, known as Easter Duddingston, pleasantly embowered among trees on the ground overlooking Joppa. The access to it was by a road inclosed by hedgerows, which stretched in a southerly direction across the fields.

It was still early in an evening in July. The air was calm and genial. The sun, sinking in the west, shed a golden gleam over the scene. Looking back, the sea seemed to be but slightly agitated; and on its surface were seen several vessels rocking, for want of a breeze to carry them on their respective courses; while beyond was the island of Inchkeith, with its light-house standing out in bold relief. All nature was calculated to harmonise the mind of the onlooker to peace and thankfulness. The very birds in the hedgerows twittered songs of happiness. The blue-bells and other little wild-flowers by the way-side might seem to be sent to lend additional ornament to a world of so much beauty.

‘Is not all this very charming?’ said Ailie to her husband. ‘I feel that to look at such a beautiful and peaceful scene must raise good thoughts in the mind.’

‘A mere illusion,’ observed Badsley. ‘Fine weather is only an accident. An iceberg drifting down from Baffin’s Bay would send a stream of cold air over the scene, that would put the whole in clouds and mist.’

Ailie’s simple conceptions were again at fault. She was disposed to lift up her heart in gladness, without caring about Baffin’s Bay or icebergs. It

seemed to her that everything she spoke about was to be matter for abstruse remark or controversy. Her husband, she thought, was too learned to be happy, or to allow others to be so. Little more was said by her before reaching Easter Duddingston, when inquiry was made regarding the house of Sandy Pergivie.

‘That’s it,’ said a little bare-footed girl, pointing to a thatched cottage with a single small window of four panes, and a wooden seat outside the door. ‘But Sandy will be at the readin’, and ye had better wait a wee while.’

‘What does she say?’ asked Badsley.

‘She says that Sandy is at prayers, and that we should wait a little. So we can sit down for a minute outside.’

They sat down, within hearing of the old man’s voice, and the singing of a psalm to the tune of the Martyrs; the sound of the devotional exercise, to Ailie’s ear, agreeably breaking the silence of the quiet summer evening.

Though not very sentimental, she drew inferences from what was passing within the humble cot, such as have inspired the most eloquent of our national poets. Here was an aged man, whose whole life from youth upwards had been a course of bodily toil and exposure; who, now on

the verge of the grave, occupied a dwelling little better than a hovel; and whose position and means of livelihood were far from enviable. Yet was this almost desolate being unostentatiously and fervently thanking the Giver of all good for unspeakable mercies—for the blessing of life, for daily bread, for being preserved from evil, and for the hope of immortality. With heart-felt piety, Ailie thought of all this. And the harrowing thought likewise passed through her mind: 'Can the man by my side, with all his learning and opportunities of well-doing, ask a blessing on his actions, or has he the conscience to be thankful for anything?'

When the sound of devotional exercise ceased, Ailie entered the cottage with her husband, and they were courteously received. The old man seemed to be between seventy and eighty years of age, nearly bald, with a wrinkled, weather-beaten countenance, placid, but bearing indications of shrewdness. Ailie put herself in communication with Bell, leaving Sandy to her husband.

'A fine evening, sir,' said Sandy.

'O yes,' replied Badsley; 'there is no fault with the weather. I understand you are a gardener. Do you work in this neighbourhood?'

O

‘I get a job now and then frae gentlemen hereabouts. For the last fortnight, I’ve been helping the gardener at Brunstain; and I am thankfu’ to be still able to do a little.’

‘I fancy you have had a good deal of experience in your profession,’ rejoined Badsley. ‘Scotch gardeners are often employed in England. Have you ever worked in the south?’

‘Weel, I canna say I have been very far south,’ answered Sandy. ‘I wrought first in Northumberland, and afterwards in the county of Durham; that was a number of years since.’

‘In what part of Durham were you working?’

‘It was close to Beaumont Hall, not far from Sunderland.’

The mention of Beaumont Hall discomposed Badsley, but he had too great a command over his feelings to let this appear; and as a sifting question, inquired the name of the occupant of the Hall.

‘He was a Mr Stanley,’ replied Sandy, ‘and was a genteel, good-looking man, a guid deal like yersel’, sir; but I didna see mickle o’ him, for he keepit himsel’ very private, and at last ran away in debt to the landlord and many tradesmen in the neighbourhood.’

These particulars were given in Sandy’s slow

and placid way, but they evidently stung Badsley to the quick. Cutting the conversation short, he rose from his seat, and requested Ailie to accompany him, as it was getting late. This she was ready to do, for she had arranged matters with Bell, and was glad to get away, in apprehension of some intemperate outbreak of her conscience-stricken husband.

With this glimpse of the past history of the Great Miner, we are prepared for some account of his somewhat remarkable career.

CHAPTER XV.

CAREER OF A NE'ER-DO-WHEEL.

IN the forces which, under the command of Sir Eyre Coote, defeated Hyder Ali, there was an English officer, Captain Frederick Sanglier, who greatly distinguished himself by his gallantry. During the campaign, it was his good-fortune to rescue from the Mahrattas a young lady, daughter of a French resident at Pondicherry, and whom he afterwards married. Returning invalided from India to England with his young French wife, the captain settled down for the remainder of his days at Southsea. Here was born his only son, Henry Sanglier. Unfortunately, from delicacy of constitution, the mother was unable to nurse her child, and it was accordingly assigned to the care of a woman, who, as it subsequently appeared, was wholly unworthy of the trust.

Opinions differ as to whether nursing by a vicious

foster-mother exercises a mental influence on children. However this may be, the boy so reared soon shewed a low type of character. He possessed a good intellectual capacity, and made great progress at school, but along with this ability there was mixed up a grievous intractableness and depravity. Knowing better, he was continually doing worse. Among his school-mates he was an overbearing tyrant; he was prone to outbursts of passion when contradicted; he studied only his own selfish ends; and, in speaking, scarcely discriminated truth from falsehood. After mischievously making some mendacious statement, he would, when reprimanded, seem repentant; but no sooner was he forgiven, than, as if under an incontrollable impulse, he would commit a fresh transgression.

On all hands, the boy was reckoned a kind of marvel. At school and college, he outstripped nearly every competitor. His memory was wonderful, and so were his powers of study and accumulation of knowledge. In outdoor sports, particularly in rowing-matches, there were few his superior. But of what avail is the greatest ability in the world, when associated with evil propensities? He was apparently incorrigible. His parents were in despair. To his mother, he was literally a heart-break, for she sunk under

efforts to wean him from vicious courses, and to cultivate in him habits befitting his social position.

Sometimes it was questioned whether he was in all respects an accountable being. Nature—or it might be art, if we look to his nurture by a foster-mother of degraded character—had so ineradicably stamped him with depraved tendencies, that, instead of punishment, he possibly deserved at least a degree of compassion. It is always difficult to adjust the balance between condemnation and pity; and never was this more the case than in judging the character of young Sanglier. Growing up, he became a torture to society, the very learning with which he was endowed making him the more dangerous to all with whom he came in contact.

Expelled, for an unpardonable irregularity, from St John's College, Cambridge, Sanglier was, by the recommendation of friends, and at his own request, entered as a volunteer on board a vessel about to set off on a whaling expedition from Hull. For this species of adventure he was eminently qualified, by his physical bravery, and by being a good oarsman. In the Greenland seas, he was intrusted with the command of a boat, and on one occasion had the address to

harpoon a large whale, which yielded thirty tons of blubber, or nearly six thousand gallons of oil. The total value of this single capture was £750. On the return of the expedition, he was complimented by the owners of the vessel, and besides a handsome sum for his services, had an offer of fresh employment next season.

As a whaler, Sanglier might have pursued an honourable and lucrative profession. But, restless in his habits, and with some money in his pocket, he resolved to engage in the hazardous enterprise of introducing British goods into Germany, in defiance of the Berlin decrees. Sailing in a well-loaded vessel from Hull, he, along with other bold spirits, got safely to Heligoland, which had then just been taken by the British from the Danes, and was used as a depot for contraband traffic. The adventure was so far successful ; but Sanglier was not satisfied. He attempted to enter the Elbe with a cargo ; and the vessel, after exchanging a few shots, was captured by a French privateer, and carried into Hamburg, where the whole of the party on board were landed as prisoners of war. Sanglier, as commander, was allowed to go as a prisoner on his parole, to Osnabrück ; whence, after a short residence, he was passed on to Strasburg.

It was now that, chafing under restriction, the baser qualities of his nature were developed. He broke his parole, and, by means of his knowledge of German and French, managed to reach Rotterdam. Here he was succoured by a merchant, who had some transactions in a circuitous way with British traffic, and by him was installed as a clerk and interpreter. Again there was a chance of an honest career for young Sanglier; but he threw it away.

In the same kantoor, or counting-house, there happened to be a half-breed from Padang, in Sumatra. His mother was a Malay, and his father was Dutch. He had, as a child, been sent to the Netherlands for his education; and would have returned to his native country, but for the fact of Padang being captured by the British in 1795. Venendal, as this youth was named, proved an evil companion for Sanglier. The covetousness of both was stimulated by the spectacle of the great fair or kermes. Regardless of consequences, they at night broke into one of the booths, and were seized in the attempt to take a bag, well filled with dollars, from under the head of the proprietor, an honest Frieslander. Being carried in disgrace before a magistrate, they were condemned to twelve months' imprisonment

in the Spin-house, as the bridewell of this busy sea-port is named.

In his bitter and humiliating confinement, Sanglier had time to reflect on his misuse of opportunities of well-doing. Apparently he was contrite, but his only aim was to impose on the clergyman who officially visited the prison. He spoke of himself as belonging to a noble family, and as being heir to large estates in England. His attempted robbery of the booth was, he said, only one of those whimsicalities in which the youth of families of rank sometimes indulge for the sake of amusement. He was sorry for what he had done, but he really meant no ill, and perhaps the clergyman would procure his liberation. Deceived by those representations, the clerical official rested not until he procured a remission of the sentence, which was given, however, on condition that Sanglier forthwith quitted the Netherlands.

Set at liberty, he could not proceed to England, in consequence of the war; and as an escaped prisoner, who had forfeited his parole, he was prevented from going openly and honestly into France. It is the fate of villainy to descend step by step in moral and social degradation. At one of the mean resorts in Rotterdam, he fell into the

hands of a French emissary, who was looking out for persons inclined to act under orders in southern Germany, and by him was enlisted as a spy in the pay of France. In this disreputable capacity he was forwarded to Vienna, where, at great risk, he kept up communications with the French government, at a time when Napoleon was preparing to make that grand *coup* on Austria which culminated in the battle of Wagram and peace of Schönbrunn.

The life which Sanglier led at Vienna suited his irregular habits. Dressed in fashionable style, he was a constant frequenter of the public gardens and other places of entertainment. Lounging amidst the crowds who eagerly listened to the bands of musicians, he learned to relish the concerto pieces for which the Germans are celebrated. In this species of idling, he was able to pick up such information as was required by his employers, as well as to sustain the character of a man of taste. Ingratiating himself with several admirers of the German drama, he on several occasions acted as a performer in private theatricals, and received a meed of applause for the manner in which he acquitted himself.

After the peace of Schönbrunn, Sanglier was despatched on secret missions to Florence and

Rome, for which purpose he sailed from Marseilles for Genoa; and now occurred the shipwreck which threw him ashore on the rugged coast of the Riviera, a romantic incident in his career that he had the pleasure of narrating at the evening party in the house of the Gilroys. For a year or two after this event, a cloud hangs over the history of this erratic being. From Naples he made his way to Sicily while both were under French rule; and in a manner unknown, though, doubtless, for some sinister purpose, he was landed in Malta. Here he was among his countrymen, and to them he told a simple tale. He had been for years confined as a prisoner of war, and had at length, after innumerable hardships, been able to reach a British possession. All he wanted was to be sent home. His wish was complied with. A frigate bound for England took him on board, and he was put ashore at Portsmouth, almost within sight of what had been his father's dwelling.

Like all returned prodigals, Sanglier was penniless. He was not absolutely in rags, nor was he unprovided with a few trinkets, the remains of his Vienna finery, which were secreted about his person. But he had no means of livelihood, and was left to his shifts. The old captain, his father, had died a year previously, believing that his son

would never more be heard of. Under this impression, he left all he possessed to an only daughter, who had been the solace of his declining years. On inquiry, Sanglier found she was married, and had emigrated to the United States. He was accordingly friendless as well as without resources. It was a hard fate, but he had brought it on himself. A man who chooses to be a criminal, or even a spendthrift, has no reason to quarrel with the wretchedness of his destiny.

We have heard of men who, after running through their fortune, recovered themselves by a course of humble and honest industry, under a strong effort of the will. Such was not the plan adopted by Sanglier. To sustain himself in the position he had forfeited, he began a systematic course of fraudulent deceptions, imagining, with his base instincts, that he could permanently enjoy himself by specious pretences and trickery. He had, he thought, good looks and a ready tongue. With these he was to make his fortune.

The idea of effecting a good marriage occurred to him as a proper commencement. Full of this notion, he honoured Bristol with a visit. There, giving himself out as Henri Adolphe Sanglier, son and heir of a wealthy landowner in Guernsey, he was pounced on by a scheming mamma, widow

of a retired tradesman, who had an only daughter to marry. A mutual deception was practised. Not till after his marriage with the young lady did the unscrupulous adventurer discover that her fortune amounted only to about five hundred pounds, and she in turn found that Sanglier had nothing but the clothes on his back (which had not been paid for), and a few articles of jewellery wherewith to dazzle the eyes of the unwary.

The sum so secured, after paying his hotel bill, was not a great thing to start with as a fashionable idler. It was sufficient for him, however, to carry his newly married wife to London, where, by the exercise of ingenious impudence, he hoped to make his way in the world. It happened that, at this juncture, a French operatic company were on a professional visit to London, and the chief baritone having been taken ill with a hoarseness, arising from an imprudent trip in a cold foggy day on the Thames, Sanglier was employed in his stead, under the feigned name of Monsieur Lestange. For some time he was engaged in this way about the theatres. The work was not satisfactory. It offered no chance of a raid on property. Something else must be thought of.

Sanglier did not abandon himself to intemperance. That must be said in his favour. Yet

he habitually frequented taverns, where he might have an opportunity of shewing off his qualities as a conversationalist. One of his favourite haunts was a house in Drury Lane, at which he was admitted to an evening club of moderate toppers. To one of these, a Scotsman named Garron, he became attached, having found him to be a good listener and disputant.

Garron was a maker of mathematical and optical instruments, and a man of considerable ingenuity. In the course of conversation, he mentioned that a civil engineer, employed by government, was about to set out with a body of assistants, to partition a district of country near the borders of Wales, which had been hitherto one of the royal forests. The roving nature of the work captivated Sanglier. He would like to be one of the party of assistants, but knew nothing practically of engineering, although he believed he might easily learn, through remembrance of his Cambridge instruction in mathematics. Garron kindly removed the difficulty. In a few lessons with the theodolite in an upper room, he taught him, or, more strictly speaking, crammed him in the art of triangulation, and procured him the required appointment. As a civil engineer, he reverted to his own name.

Leaving his wife and child in London, Sanglier now went off to the wild district bordering on Wales, which was to be the scene of operations. No one can tell what were his real designs in taking up with this new profession. It is only known that he did not continue at it any great length of time. A new idea had struck him. He would qualify himself to be a Methodist preacher. Back, therefore, he went to London; assumed the name, Jabez Clegge; shewed great eagerness as a convert; and with praiseworthy diligence had himself prepared as a missionary. He declared, from what he had seen in a certain town in Monmouthshire, that there was there a fertile, alas, too fertile a field of labour, in which he was anxious to employ his abilities. Properly equipped with what he chiefly wanted, an introduction to a pious Methodist banker, he, as the Rev. Jabez Clegge, made his appearance in the capacity of a preacher, the house of the banker being meanwhile 'his home.

Those who have perused the diverting pages of *Le Sage* will be at no loss to conjecture what was the intention of this modern *Ambrose de Lamela*. It was to plunder the unsuspecting and too hospitable banker, whose business premises adjoined his dwelling. The design was formed

with a stealthy cunning, and executed with a deliberateness which proved the perpetrator to be the most audacious of criminals. The details of the affair, as related in the newspapers of the day, are not such as we care to repeat. It is sufficient to say that the pretended preacher got off with a large booty, and reached a foreign country in safety. His wife and child shortly followed.

It is understood that Sanglier, under a freshly feigned name, that of George Augustus Rumbold, lived about three years in Lübeck, Hamburg, and other Hanse towns, carrying on an import trade with tolerably good credit. While at Hamburg, he was a frequenter of the gambling-houses of Altona. Some heavy losses at *rouge et noir* disposed him to return to England ; which he did, with his family, now consisting of his wife and three daughters. This step was hazardous, for he was bringing himself within the grasp of the law. Sanglier, however, was to the last degree daring. His effrontery and power of dissimulation are seen to have been remarkable. He could change his visage by using or disusing a moustache ; and he had a new name for himself always at the tip of his tongue.

Arriving in England, he discreetly took up new

ground, selecting the county of Durham for his place of residence. He, at the same time, thought it advisable to assume a new and peculiarly imposing designation. The name he preferred was Frederick Adolphus Stanley. Like most swindlers, he seems to have been fond of Adolphus or Augustus, either of which, as a middle name, sounded well, and looked aristocratic. As regards his new surname, Stanley, he relieved curiosity by incidentally and vaguely letting it be known that he was connected with the Derby family; in virtue of which honourable connection he took the liberty of using the not inappropriate crest of an eagle with outspread wings preying on a child lying swathed in a cradle. Altogether, his devices were adroitly managed. By renting Beaumont Hall, and apparently living in good style, he was successful in establishing a good opinion of himself in the neighbourhood.

The health of his family was one of the ostensible reasons for selecting his new quarters. Two of his children were rather delicate, and Dr Hermon Winderbach, a physician of high repute at Vienna, had recommended the air of coal-pits as suitable for their constitution. It was a curious theory. But there were always new and strange theories springing up in medical practice, and they ought

not to be disregarded. A reason more cogent, but not mentioned, was a desire to familiarise himself with the export coal-trade from the Tyne and Wear, with a view to some transactions on which he had been pondering. While occupied in gathering useful knowledge on the subject, his wife died. The poor woman had been obliged to change her name so frequently as scarcely to know who she was, and had undergone so many ups and downs as to be physically worn out. Her death was therefore accepted as a relief from the most consuming anxieties.

Shortly after this, to her, happy event, while Mr Stanley was negotiating for the export (of course, on credit) of a ship-load of coal to Hamburg, by the proceeds of which he hoped to clear a thousand pounds, an awkward circumstance occurred to give him uneasiness, and accelerate his departure. A young man employed as a clerk in the office of the coal-merchant was recognised by him as a son of the Welsh banker whose hospitality he had so greatly abused. The youth appeared to look at him suspiciously, and was thereafter observed to whisper to a companion. With the sense of hearing sharpened by apprehension, Stanley thought he overheard the young man utter the ominous word, 'Clegge.' The

circumstance was one of those cases in which guilty persons are discovered in an extraordinary manner, in distant and obscure places, where they hoped to remain unobserved. Stanley was too keenly alive to what would be the consequences of detection, to remain a day longer in the place. Hurrying to London with his children, whom he despatched to the care of their grandmother in Bristol, he was, in less than twenty-four hours, across the Channel, carrying with him a passport which sheltered him from pursuit.

Again, Sanglier—to go back to his original name—is found at Hamburg, a city which to some people possesses the attraction of being situated close to a town of an entirely different nationality. Hamburg is an accommodating place in many ways, the greatest convenience of all being its neighbourhood to Altona. There, the refugee who retreated so suddenly from Beaumont Hall, was once more offered the privilege of winning or losing large sums of money by the colour of a card, and of securing the society of men who, by their misconduct, had exiled themselves from nearly every country in Europe.

It is quite unnecessary to describe Sanglier's course of life for the next two or three years. At Hamburg he became acquainted with several

Englishmen as unprincipled and as audacious as himself, and by them there was formed a species of swindling confederacy, having a representative in different continental ports, and in the principal cities in Great Britain. In plain terms, by drawing bills on each other, and getting them discounted, by ordering goods from merchants which were never to be paid for, and other fraudulent manœuvres, they designed to carry on an extensive system of plunder.

Sanglier, from his superior learning and address, as well as from his knowledge of foreign tongues, was constituted leading member of the firm. The centre of his operations was to be Edinburgh, to which city he proceeded, settling down with his family at Portobello, as Charles Augustus Badsley. Soon, by the industrious circulation of rumours, he became known as a gentleman connected extensively with the mining districts in the north of England, and thus was usually spoken of as the Great Miner.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DENOUEMENT COMMENCES.

SUCH was the great man, who, roaming about like an evil spirit, fell in the way of Ailie Gilroy; first employing her as a governess, and then intimidating her into marrying him. It was an unhappy affair—the alliance of demoniac cunning with simplicity, crime with honesty, disbelief with piety. Fortunately for the world, a phenomenon such as the so-called Great Miner is not very common. But it exists, and the fact is not to be lost sight of by mothers who possess the vulgar ambition of cultivating the acquaintance of distinguished pretenders. Better, we think, let their daughters remain unmarried than unite them to infamy. Is there a girl who would not far rather prefer a state of singleness, than incur the heart-breaking fate of the gentle and unhappy Ailie?

Not the least extraordinary thing in the career

of Badsley—for now we must keep to this name to the last—was the immense trouble he took to be dishonest. With his abilities, natural and acquired, a hundredth part of the anxiety and toil he expended in robbing and cheating, would, with honesty, have gained him a fortune along with an honoured place in society. The circumstance is so remarkable, that one cannot help coming to the conclusion, that villainy partakes of a certain degree of mental imbecility—a prodigious short-sightedness, resembling that commonly displayed by the lower animals. All the planning, and scheming, and trickery of Ambrose de Lamela ended in his being burned at the stake as a heretic, which, we admit, was too sharp a sequel to his adventurous career. Badsley, as we shall see, did not finish quite so unpleasantly. His ending, however, was bad enough, and fairly pointed a moral.

Frank Lorimer's exertions to discover the real character of Badsley, were successful to the extent of identifying him with Stanley. It was not necessary to do more. Already, strong suspicions had spread abroad respecting the nature of his 'transactions.' His bills were beginning to be looked coldly upon. Hints were given that the indorsation would be improved by one or two

names of well-known individuals. Rather disheartening for any one to have such hints offered to him! It is always a disagreeable thing for a man to be told he must bring one or two good names to guarantee his commercial stability. When it comes to that, he may as well give in at once.

Along with these premonitions there came respectful, and afterwards urgent, intimations from tradesmen to the effect that they would be much obliged by Mr Badsley paying his account. It almost seemed as if he had never paid anybody. Accounts for clothes, boots, hats, jewellery, even for the presents he had munificently given to Ailie previous to his marriage, came in with amazing celerity.

Decent old Tammas Grindlay, the Portobello baker, who, at the stranding of the large whale on the sands, had held up the Great Miner as a pattern in paying well, began to be uncomfortable about the appearance of his pass-book, in which fifteen pages were summed up with the phrase 'carried forward,' the whole terminating in a 'total,' unpaid, of £27, 13s. 6½d. Tammas's apprehensions of ever seeing a shilling of the amount were considerably magnified by what he learned by inquiries at Jenny Barry, who

made no secret of the fact, that Hawthorn Villa was annoyingly haunted by clerks and apprentice boys from Edinburgh, dunning Badsley for payment of bills; their demands varying from seven and sixpence up to fifteen pounds; and that all they got for their long walk was 'not at home,' or a request 'to call again.'

'Jenny,' said Tammas, 'I begin to be a wee feared about gettin' the siller. D'ye think I should stop the bread?'

'I think,' replied Jenny, 'you had better let the bread run on a wee while langer, and I'll try to let you ken when there is a chance o' gettin' a few pounds.'

As Tammas viewed Jenny in the light of a friend at court, he took her advice, and let the 'bread run on;' and there is no saying how far it might have run—perhaps to the end of the pass-book, or even two pass-books—but for an abrupt and unexpected event.

Badsley never afforded Ailie the slightest information regarding his ways and means. He secretly, and for what he esteemed sufficiently good reasons, kept all to himself. Considering what he had vapouringly said about his great relations in Worcestershire, and his vast commercial transactions, she was at first puzzled to comprehend

the run which was made by tradesmen on the formerly quiet little villa in Tower Street.

Latterly, she had seen little of the Gilroys. Tom, one Saturday, when *en route* for a golfing match at Musselburgh, had called for a minute or two, and took occasion to hint that he was afraid the affairs of the Great Miner were a little unsettled; but added the hope that all might perhaps turn out well. Such was the first intimation she received. It rendered her anxious, and in the midst of her anxieties she became a mother, giving birth to a boy—her only child.

At this crisis came the demand for additional domestic assistance, and for a few weeks Bell Pergivie was assiduous in her attentions. Within the sound of clamorous duns, Ailie had some enjoyment in nursing her boy, who was named Frederick, in honour possibly of Captain Frederick Sanglier. Little Freddy, as his mother endearingly called him, was a more than usually robust and healthy child, and thrived apace under her careful treatment. Sometimes, her cheerfulness was clouded with dark forebodings, and tears dropped on the face of her sleeping infant, to whom might not inaptly have been applied the words of Langhorne:

‘The child of misery, baptised in tears.’

What was to be the fate of this poor infant, gave Ailie more concern than her own personal welfare.

When the child was about a month old, Badsley, on returning after an absence of a few days, made a strange and peremptory announcement.

‘I am tired of Portobello,’ he said; ‘we must remove immediately to a place where my presence is daily required in some large business transactions. Staying in this out-of-the-way spot is absolutely deranging my affairs. So, get ready.’

‘Well,’ replied Ailie calmly, ‘I can be very soon ready; but the removal of the furniture will require some arrangement. We must employ a carter for the business.’

‘No such thing,’ rejoined Badsley. ‘We have nothing to take but two or three portmanteaus, and the servant’s chest. We shall go off, bag and baggage, in an Edinburgh cab, which I have secured for the purpose. It is to be at the door at six o’clock to-night. And there’s an end of it.’

Ailie was astonished. The truth now dawned on her, that the Great Miner had not a piece of furniture he could call his own. She had been living all this time in a furnished house, hired from some one. A melancholy disenchantment this. The great man she had married was

only a poor houseless being—a vagabond, owning nothing but a few articles of wearing apparel, and even these had been acquired by deception. Properly speaking, the man had nothing. In the proposed removal, there was certainly little to carry away, which was a convenience; but the poverty of the concern into which she had been entrapped was not at all a pleasant discovery for Ailie to make, with a baby only a month old, and the future a wild blank of uncertainty.

But, if discomposed, had she not still her husband? Her husband! Who was he? She could not tell. Her mind was in a state of confusion regarding her own name. When married, she had, as she understood, become Mrs Badsley, and people called her so. But according to the revelations of Sandy Pergivie and his daughter, Bell, she was Mrs Stanley. Even in that there was no certainty. The eldest girl had one day indiscreetly let it be known that, when in Hamburg, she bore the pretty name of Fräulein Rumbold, and that her grandmother called her Miss Sanglier; hinting that there were other designations she had a claim to. Very perplexing all this.

Ailie was inclined to ask, 'Who am I?' She felt that it would be most obliging if any one worthy of credit would tell her what was her real

name. Was it Badsley, or Stanley, or Rumbold, or Sanglier, or what was it? It would be altogether useless to put the question to Badsley, who, she knew, was not Badsley. The man was an embodiment of falsehood. Everything he had said about his possessions in Durham and Northumberland, and his connection with the coal-trade, and his relations in Worcestershire, and the fine old manor-house in the parish of Badsley-cum-Bampton, was an invention and a snare. The whole thing was a delusion, and vanished away like mist before the rising sun.

Another matter gave her great uneasiness. Ever since the commencement of the run upon the villa by tradesmen, she had noticed some remarkable changes in her husband's appearance. He had become less and less decorated, till at length none of his finery was left. First, the splendid diamond ring ceased to be visible; then followed the brooch, and lastly the gold chain. Where they went to, she could not tell, but she had her suspicions.

More humiliations were in store for this forlorn being. She observed, with some concern, that on one pretence or other, valuable household articles were gradually disappearing. An ornamental pendule under a glass shade, which stood on

the mantelpiece of the drawing-room, was taken away by Badsley, on the excuse that it needed cleaning. It was never more seen, having doubtless been pawned or sold.

Ailie had noticed her wretchedly penniless husband looking with wistful eyes at her gold watch—Aunt Tolmie's watch—and, fearing it might likewise vanish on the score of 'cleaning,' she kept it constantly beside her. Failing to secure this treasured gift, Badsley made prey of other articles of value, and it was clear that, in his desperation, he was systematically carrying off as his own what belonged to the proprietor of the premises. Hard reflection that for a young wife and mother who had been cozened into matrimony!

Now comes the night journey to the fresh quarters that had been selected for the family.

The stretch of bleak ground, partially broken into sand-holes and dotted over with furze, which bordered the shore of the Firth between Leith and Portobello, was at this time known as the Figget Whins, and the road which crossed it had almost as bad a repute for being a resort of highwaymen as Hounslow or Finchley. It was along this dreary path that the vehicle carried Badsley and his wife with her baby in her arms, his two surviving daughters, and Jenny Barry; the baggage

of the whole party being stowed on the roof, or tied on behind. Ailie's guitar was accommodated inside. The only articles belonging to Badsley that were left in the house, were a shelf-ful of old street directories. These, which he described as his library, were graciously left for the benefit of the landlord, and they were all he ever got for his rent, and the articles which had been so unceremoniously abstracted from the dwelling.

And so, adieu was bidden to Portobello. It was a miserable as well as a disreputable flight, in a miserably cold night in November, and was succeeded by a miserable arrival in what was to be the new home of the travellers.

Jenny Barry could not understand this extraordinary method of flitting; but she acquiesced, and held her peace, from her loyal adherence to Ailie, whose fate so much resembled her own. So hurriedly had the flight been conducted, that she had no time to communicate with Tammas Grindlay, and he, like others in Portobello, was next morning at a loss to know what had become of the Great Miner and his belongings. There was a great summing-up of pass-books that morning, when the news became general. The little town had received a shameful requital for its admiration of the Great Miner.

There are certain places on the face of the earth where nobody with any considerations for comfort would like to take up their abode. One of these is the dreary bit of ground extending westwards from the Figget Whins. Bordering on the Firth, the sea-blasts sweep over it with a fierceness which, at least at the time we speak of, cuts off the growth of vegetation above any inclosing walls. Instead of rolling in on gently sloping sands, the waves dash and fret on the huge boulders which form the only memorials of a common that has literally been washed away to a nonentity.

To that wild spot was Ailie driven with her child. A small furnished house, built and owned by some person with a fancy for cold and isolation, and environed by a wall, to give it the interesting appearance of a prison or a lunatic asylum, received the cabful of travellers. Getting within the portal in the wall, Ailie felt alarmed at the gloomy aspect of the place, and would have resisted if she durst. Hugging her babe in her arms, to shelter it as far as possible from the sea-blast, she was guided by the faithful Jenny, while Badsley with a lantern went in front to light them along the pathway.

‘An awfu’-like gowsty place this to come to,

mem,' observed Jenny in a subdued tone of voice. 'Cover the bairn weel up in your cloak; ay, that will do. I hope there will be a fire on.'

'I hope so too,' said Ailie.

But there was no fire. Jenny pronounced the place to be 'as black as the crook,' and she had to set about getting things into what she called decent order; her chief anxiety being about Ailie, who she was afraid would 'take a weid'—that is to say, a feverishness from the effects of cold; and then 'what would become o' the bairn?'

Ailie, luckily, did not take a weid. Her natural buoyancy of spirit kept her up—so true is the old saying, that 'a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.' The transfer to this 'outlandish district,' as Jenny Barry described it, fortunately did no injury to any one. And with a new day, Ailie braced herself up for what was to come next.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT BECAME OF AILIE AND FREDDY.

IN disappearing from Portobello, Badsley also disappeared from his Edinburgh creditors. No longer was he seen in Princes Street. The world was at a loss to know what had become of him ; for, as he did not venture out from his retreat during the day, and allowed no epistolary correspondence with the exterior, it seemed as if he and his family had melted into space. Ailie was a kind of prisoner. Her relations were, for a short time, ignorant of her place of residence, and could answer no inquiries on the subject.

The Badsleys, of course, required to live. The youngest girl, however, as a confidential scout, did all the requisite shopping ; while, in the evening, when the father was absent in conducting his transactions, the eldest daughter acted as keeper to the establishment. What the nature of the

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transactions were, soon became manifest. To procure means for subsistence, the practice of carrying away articles, and disposing of them for money, was continued. The house was as well furnished as that at Portobello, and formed a convenient field for rapine. Though not knowing exactly what was her name, Ailie at all events felt assured that she was the wife of a robber; and frightful apprehensions, that he might be guilty of some act that would bring him to an ignominious end, passed through her bewildered brain.

Why, when reduced to such abject shifts, Badsley did not abscond outright, was never clearly explained. The discovery and breaking up of the swindling fraternity had perhaps paralysed him. He may, on the whole, have thought himself safest in Edinburgh, where his transactions, so far as known, might, at the utmost, fall within the charge of breach of trust and fraudulent bankruptcy. Or—and this we think the most probable explanation—he could not think of deserting, and for ever losing his newly-born son. Attachment to his children has been spoken of as an extenuating feature in his character. This attachment was now vastly strengthened by the existence of little Freddy, whose fingers twining round his own were felt as an

appeal, which overcame every consideration of personal insecurity.

The Gilroys were in a state of distraction. So acute was the distress of the mother for the loss of her dear Ailie, that Dugald had not the heart to refer to her delusions respecting the 'white dove.' She spared any remark on the subject, by declaring that she had been very wrong. 'That white doo,' she poignantly observed, 'had been a black sicht to the hale o' them; and she hoped that it would be never more spoken about.'

Tom was now effectually roused from the complacency which had led him to think more of a Petersham hat than the welfare of his sister. A little ashamed for his lack of vigilance, he visited Portobello, to find the lost one, if it were at all practicable. Tammis Grindlay, who, on his own account, had been anxious to discover the fugitives, afforded the first gleam of information.

There was a poor woman, of middle age and masculine appearance, known as Pig Nell, who went about hawking crockery in the neighbourhood. Nell usually wore a soldier's scarlet coat, which had seen a good deal of service; and in this fashion, with a man's hat, and a short pipe in her mouth, she drove a small cart, containing her humble wares.

Pig Nell's commercial range extended from Musselburgh to as far as Leith and Newhaven, taking Portobello by the way, as she went to and fro. In going through a populous district, she summoned customers to her cart by noisily rubbing the rims of two bowls together, much as you would rub together a pair of cymbals. On coming to parts of her route, with a house only here and there, she called at the respective dwellings to inquire if anything was wanted, or if there were any rags to be disposed of.

In the exercise of this industry, Nell was a useful member of society. She was well known, and, with all her roughness, respected for her honesty. Acting as a carrier in a small way, she delivered messages and parcels in the course of her journey. Tammas Grindlay thought of enlisting her services as a detective.

'Nelly, my woman,' said he coaxingly to her one day, 'I want you to help us to find out where the Badsleys are gane to.'

'How is it to be done?' asked Nell. 'I canna be speering at ilka door I pass.'

'No, no; we dinna expect that,' rejoined Tammas. 'Just keep looking about. Ye'll maybe see Jenny Barry, or some o' the young misses. I'm thinking the family is no far off.'

‘I’m no’ very clear about takin’ the job in hand,’ said Nell. ‘Mr Badsley is a grand man, and I’m but a puir woman, and I might be brought into trouble.’

‘No fears of that,’ rejoined Tammas. ‘Badsley is not a grand man at all, but a mean-spirited person, and poorer than you are. You pay your way, like an honest woman; and he, for a’ his fine airs, canna face his creditors. I doubt we’ll no’ get a farthing in the pound.’

‘But,’ observed Nell shrewdly, ‘if he canna pay his creditors sae meikle as a farthing in the pound, what’s the use o’ speerin’ after him? Let him gang, and nae mair about it. In my puir opinion, ye’re weel quit o’ him.’

‘That may be, Nelly,’ said Tammas. ‘But we must try to get him punished. And just think o’ his wife, a respectable young woman, who is suddenly wheeled off, and a’ her friends in a state o’ distress about her.’

In mentioning Badsley’s young wife, Tammas had touched on a tender part. Pig Nell had received some small civilities from Ailie, and now, pitying her condition, resolved to do what was in her power to restore her to her friends; a circumstance shewing how, in our complex state of society, some trifling acts of kindness—even

kindliness of manner—towards a poor person may possibly lead to a valued requital.

Without further demur, Nell agreed to make such inquiries, in the course of her extensive rambles, as might discover Badsley's place of refuge. And truly did she keep her word. In less than a week, she furnished Tammas with intelligence which pointed to the retreat of the runaways.

To think of the Great Miner, who had dazzled the eyes of everybody, being sunk so low as to be tracked and discovered by a female dealer in crockery, dressed in a worn-out soldier's coat—a kind of modified Moll Flagon—whom he would have affected to hold in the loftiest contempt! A step, truly, from the sublime to the ridiculous!

With the clue afforded by Nell, all was plain. Through the agency of a boy who supplied the Badsley family with milk, Tom managed to send a brief note to his sister.

Ailie was one evening seated beside her child, who lay asleep on a couch, and was now about six weeks old. The season was the beginning of winter. Snow covered the ground with a white mantle several inches deep. There was a fresh fall, accompanied by a cold wind, which blew in gusts from the north-west. The mother, though

full of dreary thoughts, sang with tenderness, as a lullaby, one of her favourite melodies, *Oh, Hush thee, my Baby*, and was warbling the words,

‘Oh, rest thee, babe, rest thee, babe, sleep on till day ;
Oh, rest thee, babe, rest thee, babe, sleep while you may ;’

when a gentle tap was made at the door of her apartment. Ceasing to sing, Ailie arose, and, opening the door, Jenny Barry presented herself.

‘Come in, Jenny,’ she said. ‘Has anything unusual happened ?’

‘Happened ! ower mickle has happened, and naebody can tell what has to happen next. See, there is a bit line to you.’

Ailie seized the note. She saw it was directed by Tom, and eagerly opened and read it. It ran as follows :

‘MY DEAR AILIE—All is discovered about Badsley. He is one of a gang of swindlers, and will immediately be prosecuted. You must not think of living with him. Come to us with your child as soon as you can. Fly. Our house will be open for you night and day,’ &c.

‘Who gave you this, Jenny ?’ she inquired.

‘I got it this mornin’ frae the bit callant that brings the milk, and have been watchin’ a’ day to gie it to you.’

‘Has Mr Badsley gone out ?’

‘Yes,’ replied Jenny ; ‘he gaed out about an

hour syne, and said he would be soon back. He fears something will go wrang. Ill doers are aye ill dreaders. The auldest lassie is to answer the door-bell, and her sister is beside her. Baith o' them are in the back-parlour.'

'Jenny, the note is from my brother, and he tells me to fly, and take baby with me. Can I do it?'

'I'se warrant you can do it, if you like. I dinna think the girls will rise frae the fireside if they can help it, for it's an awfu cauld nicht. Sae, if you wish to gang, you may, but it's dreadfu' to think o' the bairn wi' sic snaw on the grund, and mair fallin' every minute. However, it's a grand chance, and may not soon come again.'

'I will go, I will go, Jenny,' said Ailie. 'I will encounter all risks to try to get home. I can wrap up the bairn in a shawl under my cloak, and I will run as fast as I can across the Links. I know the road.'

'Hae ye ony orders to leave?' inquired Jenny.

'None. Mr Badsley must look after his two girls himself. I have no longer a part with them. No one can blame me for leaving him and them, after the way I have been treated. I will take nothing with me but what is my own. I am only sorry to leave my guitar, but you will take care of

it, and perhaps will get it sent to me. Many thanks, Jenny, for all your kindness. I shall never forget it.'

So saying, Ailie rapidly made a few arrangements for her flight. In the first place, she divested herself of her rings, ear-rings, and every other article which she had received from Badsley, even to the smallest coin, leaving no money in her pocket whatsoever. All these articles she left for her husband, it being her firm resolution to take nothing that had belonged to him; and in this simple fact alone we see the noble integrity of her character.

Having performed this act of self-denial, she sought out a bundle of private papers, and threw the whole of them into the fire, except the greatly esteemed valentine, which she thrust into one of her pockets. She firmly tied on her head the gipsy straw bonnet; saw that Aunt Tolmie's gold watch was well secured by a ribbon round her neck, and deposited safely in her bosom; then she threw over her the gray mantle, which had likewise been gifted to her by the same kind relative.

Finally, when all was prepared, she softly lifted Freddy from his couch, and wrapping him in a shawl, stood ready for her desperate enterprise.

Usually meek and submissive, at that moment she possessed the vigour and resolution of a heroine.

‘Now,’ said she to Jenny, ‘let me go.’

Jenny, on tiptoes, escorted her down the stair, and across the lobby, and then quietly unlocking and opening the door, ushered her to the postern in the outer wall, which she also opened, fortunately without raising an alarm in the dwelling. The two girls in the parlour were unaware of the movement.

The night was dismal. Not a star could be seen, for the falling snow darkened the atmosphere. - It was cold, but not so intensely as to freeze the ground. The snow lay thick and moist, calculated to wet the feet of pedestrians, and retard their progress. It was one of those ugly nights in which nobody ventures out who can possibly stay at home. At the first sensation of the cold, with the snow blowing in gusts in her face, Ailie’s courage almost quailed. She dreaded the effects on the infant. Freddy, however, remained quiet, unconscious of what his mother was encountering for his sake. Turning to the left, in a westerly direction, and once more nerving herself, and bidding farewell to Jenny Barry, she dashed onward at a good pace along the public road.

On her right, was the sea raging on the fallen boulders. There was nothing to fear, if she could keep to the road. Her intention was to hold directly forward till she came to the cluster of buildings known as Seafield Baths, and then turn the corner into the road which pursues its way along the south side of the Links. This, she thought, was preferable to going by the more frequented road through the outskirts of Leith; for in that direction she was apprehensive of meeting in with, and being obstructed in her flight by Badsley.

Luckily, she made her way safely along the sea-bank; and, piloted by a public lamp at the corner of the Baths, she turned aside in the required route, feeling, as she did so, a sense of relief. If Badsley now followed her, it could be only after having gone home, and discovered her escape.

Yet, the path she selected was not altogether free from risk of interruption. What if Badsley should have been in Edinburgh, and, returning by the Easter Road, came down this side of the Links? That question occurred to Ailie before she had gone very far. In her alarm, she left the beaten track, and aimed at going in a diagonal direction across the common. It was an unwise

step, considering the darkness, the snow, and the unevenness of the ground.

The Links, forming a piece of ground of historical interest, were not then so smooth, nor kept in such good order as they now are. They were dotted over with furze, and abounded in hillocks and sand-holes. Among these 'hazards,' as golfers would call them, the poor fugitive made her way with difficulty. Now and then there was a partial glimpse of a distant public lamp, which, however, afforded no guide to her footsteps. With the snow driving in her face, and her mind occupied with her child, she stumbled on in no distinct direction, and at last fairly lost her way, and she was brought to a stand-still.

The spot at which she had arrived did not seem to belong to the Links. It appeared to her to be partly environed by a wall, and she wandered round and round the inclosure till she was dizzy. She would have groped her way, had not both her hands been employed in carrying the child. At length, her foot encountering an obstacle, she nearly fell, and in the exertion to save herself, Freddy was roused from his slumber, and began to cry. In her distress, she sat down. By an extraordinary coincidence, she had seated herself on the mass of fallen turf which had been occupied

by Frank Lorimer, when he sought refuge from the storm of rain, and composed the concluding lines in the verses he addressed 'To Ailie.'

A little rest on the snow-clad turf revived her. She composed the child, and adjusted herself for continuing the journey. She now recollected the sand-bunk into which she had accidentally wandered, and taking the right direction, got into the open ground. But immediately, she again lost her way amidst the snow and drift. Still, she pushed on, and, to her relief, she reached the public path from which she had incautiously diverged. The spot was at the connection with a road which crosses the Links near the middle. Here was a lamp, and near the lamp a bulky stone, on which Ailie sat down to consider matters a little, and again compose Freddy.

While so resting, she was alarmed by sounds on the road, and was about to plunge back into the open common for safety, when the cause of her apprehension was dimly seen to be a youth battered with snow on a pony. In an instant, Ailie conjectured who was the rider. He could be no other than Johnny Hutchison.

'Johnny! Johnny! Is that you, Johnny Hutchison?' cried the wayworn being.

Johnny turned the pony aside in answer to the

call. 'Ailie Gilroy—I beg pardon, Mrs Badsley. How came you to be here in such a night as this?'

'It is a long story, Johnny, and this is not the time for it,' answered Ailie. 'I want to get to my mother's house in Edinburgh. I have lost my way, Johnny. Can you help me?'

'I'll help you as well as 'I can,' said Johnny. 'If you can hold on by the powney, I will at least set you on the right road for home.'

This being arranged, Ailie tramped on by the side of the pony. Her fatigue was not lessened, but she had an escort, and was sure of her way. Soon she learned the reason for Johnny's late expedition.

For several days, he had been unable to 'take the good out of the toll-ticket,' as was customary, in consequence of a very bad toothache. Old Hutchison, the father, was extremely chagrined at this loss of property. For three days, he had wrung nothing out of the ticket. The twopence paid for Roderick at Canonmills toll-bar had been little better than a dead loss. Johnny being recovered from his severe and highly improper toothache, was enjoined to compensate as far as possible for the loss, by taking Roderick on an unusually extensive round of toll-bars.

Johnny had a great dislike to the journey, in

consequence of the cold, and approaching darkness. But no objections shook the old miser's determination to squeeze out the value of the ticket. By command, his son had ridden the poor pony out by Liberton and Dalkeith, and, after taking in Magdalen Bridge and Seafield, was only now on his way home. That day's toll-ticket had cleared six bars, and one at the Easter Road was still to be passed through before getting into town.

On a recital of the expedition with Roderick, Ailie was sorry to find that Johnny could not take the route home by Leith Walk, which she designed to travel; but the reason was plain. The toll-bar at Leith Walk was exceptional, and could not be cleared by the ticket for surrounding bars; wherefore Johnny had no choice within reasonable bounds. Ailie, for the sake of the escort, would gladly have paid twopence for Roderick at Leith Walk, but she possessed no money; and, besides, to have let off the Easter Road bar would have incurred the indignation of old Hutchison. There was, accordingly, no alternative. Ailie was obliged to part with Johnny and Roderick, and make her way up Leith Walk alone. Although still embarrassed with the snow, she was on a broad and well-lighted thoroughfare, and felt emboldened to proceed.

The principal and more difficult part of the night journey was now over, and Ailie congratulated herself in having effected her flight so well to this point. She still feared meeting Badsley, and the struggle with him that might possibly ensue. But there was at the same time the comforting consideration that she could see her way, and be protected by passengers, in the event of any attempted interruption and outrage. Never, with her own consent, would she return and live under the same roof with Badsley. Her whole feelings revolted at his depravity. Solemn as were her matrimonial obligations, she hardly thought that they warranted her in dwelling with a husband whose means of livelihood for himself and family were derived from a systematic violation of law and decency. And so she pursued her way with great bodily fatigue, but an approving conscience.

In the course of her flight, on entering the town, Ailie had occasion to pass Frank Lorimer's place of business. His window, she saw, was lit up. The sound was heard of work busily going on within; and Frank's voice, singing merrily at his honest labour, swelled amidst the gloom. How she would have liked to call on Frank, draggled, wet, and footsore as she was! But it might not

be. A sense of delicacy pointed out the impropriety of her seeking shelter, or rest, anywhere but in the house of her mother, from which she had been unhappily inveigled. Her duty, she felt, was to push on for home, and onward she went. Nor did she stop with her weary burden till she gained the well-remembered common stair, rang the bell, and sank down, exhausted, in the parlour of the Gilroys.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUDING SCENES.

THERE was great rejoicing in the house of the Gilroys in securing possession of Ailie. The lamb had been rescued from the fangs of the wolf, and in a way to excite the tenderest emotions. Ailie was undressed and comforted, and, with her baby in her arms, left to enjoy a sound sleep in bed, under a sense of liberty and security. The family, however, were by no means certain that the refugee and her child were secure. They now knew the desperate character of Badsley, and, fearing his vengeance, the house was by general consent proclaimed to be in a state of siege. The door was locked, and put on the chain, so that no one could enter without permission. It was unnecessary to fasten the windows, for they were sixty feet from the ground. As a reinforcement for the garrison, it was agreed that next morning

old Eppie Britherstanes should be retained on permanent duty. She was not good for much, it was observed, but she could at a pinch run for a policeman, or call in the assistance of neighbours.

With these matters settled, and trusting that the war, at anyrate, would not commence for the next twelve hours, all went off to bed. They had just dropped asleep, when the whole were wakened by the loud ringing of the bell, and the most frightful knocking at the door. The enemy was on them, and what was to be done? Without opening the door, should he be parleyed with, defied, and told to go about his business? Such was thought to be the most advisable course.

Tom, Dugald, and Bessie undertook the duty of hurling defiance.

‘Who is making all that noise?’ shouted Tom through the door. ‘Go away, or I shall call for the police.’

‘Who I am, I shall soon shew you,’ responded the person addressed. ‘I want my wife and child. Give them up instantly, or I will compel you, and punish you.’

‘Threatened folk live lang!’ cried Bessie. ‘You had better go off about your business, or it will be the worse for you. We’ll keep Ailie and her

bairn in spite o' you. So off you set, and gie us nae mair trouble.'

Dugald fortified these suggestions by recommending Badsley to depart quietly, but was-not listened to. The knocking continued. Mrs Gilroy now arrived on the scene, and opened like a fury on Badsley.

'Gang away, you wretch, and let us never see the face o' ye. You've brought enough o' misery on an honest family, and have a heavy sin to answer for. It sets you weel to come to my door seekin' for my puir bairn; but you'll never get her, or her wee bit wean either. O man, man, what a black sicht ye hae been to us! Mony ane has been hanged for less. Gang away, I tell ye, and leave us in peace.'

Finding it impossible to gain admittance, and fearing the arrival of the police, for the neighbours below were beginning to appear on the stair, Badsley desisted from the attack, and went away vowing a terrible vengeance on the family.

Suffering from this painful invasion, the Gilroys slept no more that night. All anxiously cogitated on the most suitable means for the protection of Ailie and her child. Taking counsel together in the morning over their respective tea-pots, it was resolved to construct a secret retreat above the

ceiling, and immediately under the slates. It was a place lit only by a single pane of glass, was without flooring, and had no ventilation except by opening a hatch which was used by the chimney-sweeps.

In one corner of this lofty and obscure retreat there was a water-cistern, supplied by a service-pipe from the street, and from which descended a pipe to the dwelling beneath. The place was close, ill-lit, and stuffy; besides being so confined in dimensions, that no one could stand upright in it. The only access was by a square hole in the roof of the lobby, usually reached by the ladder of the chimney-sweep.

Such was the dismal Patmos to which Ailie and Freddy were to be consigned. A kind of den was prepared for them behind the cistern, the pathway to it being by two planks laid across the joists; and the walking along which was very perilous, for a false step would send any one through the ceiling of the apartments below.

It was seen the fugitives could not remain long in a place so stifling; but it would answer the purpose until better arrangements could be made. So to it Ailie ascended by means of a chair placed on the top of a table, and when she was fairly up, Freddy was handed to her.

These precautions were not taken a minute too soon. Badsley arrived with a police-officer in search of his child. There was no law by which he could force the recovery of his wife without her consent. But to the child he had a valid claim, and it could be sought for by legal warrant. The search was ineffectual. Roaming through the house like what Bessie compared to 'a raging lion,' Badsley could not discover either wife or child. The hatchway was thought of, but relinquished without inspection; the belief being, that Ailie must have gone away to the house of some friend.

Badsley was not to be baffled by any paltry contrivance of this kind. He was himself the subject of legal inquiry; but his prosecution was tedious, and meanwhile he could invoke the aid of the law. An officer armed with a warrant prowled about the street in quest of the child, for every search in the house was fruitless.

At this critical and lamentable juncture, Ailie was usefully assisted by Jenny Barry, who had quitted the service of Badsley. Bringing with her the much-loved guitar, Jenny was hailed as a valuable auxiliary, and willingly took her turn in the Patmos above the hatchway with little Freddy. As is well known from the amount

of infant mortality in the homes of the humbler classes of people, nursing, however tender, is of little value without an abundance of fresh air. The child languished by confinement, and, running all risks, Jenny was at times, in a favourable state of the weather, sent out with him, for a walk in an airy part of that agreeable inclosure, the Queen Street Gardens.

One fine forenoon, while seated with one or two nursery-maids near the ornamental pond in the centre of the gardens, and letting her tongue go about Badsley, she was touched on the shoulder by a man whom she at first took to be one of the gardeners.

‘That is Mr Badsley’s child, is it not?’ said the man, at the same time exhibiting a paper. ‘I am a sheriff-officer, and this is my warrant to take possession of the infant. You will follow me.’

Resistance was useless, and so was a request to be permitted to tell the mother of the unexpected incident. Greatly against her will, Jenny was obliged to go along with the officer, who conducted her to a house in India Place, Stockbridge, where the child was resigned by her to a nurse appointed to receive it. The parting with her charge was a bitter pang; and bitter were Ailie’s feelings when she learned that she had

been robbed of her infant. Shedding a flood of tears, and throwing herself on a sofa, she uttered wailingly, in her grief:

‘O my Freddy, my Freddy, my dear little Freddy! am I never to see you more? My loved one, are you gone? Oh, my heart is like to break!’

The condition of Ailie was now very pitiable. She thought not of any advantage to be derived from being left unembarrassed to pursue again an independent professional career. Her maternal affections, her sense of duty to her infant, were too keen for that. She would suffer any privation rather than part with Freddy. The Providence who had strengthened her to escape from an infamous alliance would, she was convinced, enable her to toil, if it were necessary, for the support and education of her child. The very circumstance of rescuing him from such a father was a reason for wishing to have him restored to her keeping.

Ailie had not occasion to continue her outbursts of despair at the loss of her infant. Soon was she comforted. Perhaps Badsley imagined that she would return to him for the sake of the child. If he thought so, he was mistaken. She remained with the Gilroys, contenting herself with frequent

visits to the dwelling of the nurse. Though in humble circumstances, this woman was not worthless. She exerted herself to perform the office of foster-mother to Freddy, and candidly acknowledged that all her attentions were in vain. The child fretted in her keeping; for days, he scarcely ceased crying. A representation to this effect to the proper authority, supported by evidence, led at once to the restoration of Freddy to his mother.

Not any more were Ailie and her child molested. So far as they were concerned, the play had been played out.

Though slow and formal, the law was sure. By no device could Badsley elude its firm operation. The frauds and false representations of which he had been guilty in Edinburgh and its neighbourhood were fully substantiated; and he was doomed to, and suffered, a long imprisonment. Fortunately for himself, he escaped any charge regarding his earlier and more serious delinquencies.

In quitting her husband, Ailie had thrown herself exclusively on the kindness of her family, and it is to be said to their honour that all manifested the utmost sympathy with the sufferer. Whatever was the remissness in allowing her to enter the

service of Badsley as a governess—and that was the primary blunder, by whoever committed—there was now but one desire manifested by all to remedy the evil as far as was practicable. We have seen how they received Ailie and her child ; how, in their own simple way, they tried to shelter her from her ruthless pursuer, as if their own happiness had been concerned. So much must be said of the brotherly and sisterly conduct of the Gilroys ; and, accordingly, with all their eccentricities, they deserve to be spoken of with that degree of respect which is due to sentiments of benevolence.

It was fortunate for all, that our heroine experienced no permanent discomforts in quitting the home of her worthless husband. Shortly after the restitution of her child, Ailie became heir to the possessions of her grand-aunt Tolmie. That kind old lady, at her death, left her everything she possessed, and in such a way as to be secure from the attacks of her husband. Unselfish, Ailie felt happy in communicating happiness to others. The inheritance came at a time when she had an opportunity of acknowledging and repaying the generosity of those immediately related to her. A change, accordingly, amounting to a revolution, came over the external condition of the family.

Joyful and memorable was the day, when the Gilroys removed from the top story in the common stair, the scene of so many dramatic circumstances, and took up their abode in Miss Tolmie's antiquated villa, with its shady walks and bowers, its bees, its flower-garden, and its dilapidated figure of Pan playing on his reed in the grass to the fragmentary leg dancing on its pedestal.

Here life would have drifted on without alloy, but for one distressing circumstance. Badsley's term of imprisonment expired, and he was again at large, with a brain fertile in schemes of dishonesty. He made attempts to induce Ailie to return to him, but without avail. He had forfeited all regard by his past villainy, as well as by his disreputable means of living. Limited as Edinburgh was as a field for his predatory operations, and damaged as he was in character, he had the address to resume and carry on for years a system of imposition and plunder.

Literature abounds in stories of bandits who carry on a sort of open war on society, risking their lives in deeds of violence. Fielding classically informs us of the utter unscrupulousness of Jonathan Wild, in his peculiar line of depravity. Le Sage invests roguery in tales of humour. But no writer that we are aware of, has imagined

anything so unromantic and despicable in the predatory class as the operations of Badsley. Learned, clever, ingenious, he stooped to an almost unheard-of meanness in preying on his fellow-creatures. It is proper to mention it, if only as an instance of the expedients to which one who had twice passed through the category of an 'eligible,' may be driven to sustain appearances.

His plan was singularly simple and uniform. It consisted of hiring furnished houses, and selling the articles they contained. Flitting about from one point of the compass to another, changing his name, and fortifying himself with false references, he laid waste dwelling after dwelling, besides encroaching on the tradesmen in every neighbourhood where he took up his residence. In his depredations on a mansion, he usually began by carrying off the time-pieces, and finished off with the tables and chairs. As a swarm of locusts devours all green things it alights upon, so did Badsley go on devouring everything on which he laid hands. Was this a man with whom the gentle and truthful Ailie could consort?

Although he had ceased to persecute his unfortunate wife, she was never free from apprehension of outrage as long as he lived. Improved in social position, and devoting herself to the

care of her boy, Ailie was disposed to be useful beyond the domestic sphere. Her piety led her to engage in schemes of charity and mercy, and to some extent she acted as a missionary among the sick and destitute in the older part of the city. Her faculties overflowed in deeds of humanity and benevolence, a circumstance which gained her a wide circle of friends. Her sad fate was known and pitied. No early friend was lost through her unhappy connection with Badsley. The manner in which she had endured and surmounted her tribulations served to raise her in general esteem and admiration.

Mrs Pringle and her daughter, Grace, remained staunch friends; their appreciation of Ailie being augmented by the discreet and lady-like manner in which she had acquitted herself in very trying circumstances. The marriage of Miss Pringle to a land-proprietor in the neighbourhood did not break off the intercourse, which continued through life.

Ailie had been but in a slight way connected with the Balchristies, and it was not matter for regret that the acquaintanceship ceased. After all their mother's scheming, Julia and Augusta did not effect alliances to reward them for the trouble and anxiety they had undergone in quest of husbands. The best that Julia could secure was

a lieutenant in a regiment of foot. It was what everybody called a poor marriage, and so it was in more ways than one. But Julia had a great satisfaction—she had not married a man qualified by intelligence for any industrial occupation, and consequently not a muff. So far, she had realised her wish. As for Augusta, she became the wife of Jack Pickerton—bluff and not very brilliant Jack—who, with all his aristocratic tastes and associations, was only a wine-touter, and hovered upon the borders of muffism. All the money and exertions spent in trying to get something better, had been thrown away.

Among those old friends who cherished feelings of respect and compassion for Ailie, none was so conspicuous for his attentions as Frank Lorimer. By his assiduous industry and enterprise, Frank had now greatly risen in the social scale. He might have married—for there was no want of a choice—but his affections had already been expended. There could not, as he thought, be a second Ailie. He would for ever remain unmarried for the sake of this loved one. He would be to her as a brother, watch over her, shew her all the attentions befitting their mutual condition. Without a single word of explanation, Ailie reciprocated these delicate sentiments. When two

hearts vibrate in unison, explanations are hardly necessary, and might only cause a discordance.

As Ailie was sometimes unable to return home from her benevolent excursions till night-fall, she relied on Frank for an escort to the villa, and he was happy in the thought that she could rely on him for protection. Yet, these services were not believed to be free from danger. The way was solitary, and in grasping Frank's arm as they paced down the long dingy avenue to the mansion, she was ruffled by the smallest noise among the trees—fearing every moment that Badsley might dart from a lurking-place and commit a crime still more desperate than any in which he had hitherto been engaged.

The time arrived when all such terrors ceased. Badsley's course of delinquency was run. A house-factor having found, to his dismay, that he had inadvertently, through a fraudulent representation, let a furnished mansion to him at Newington, resolved to set a watch on his proceedings. The wretched man was detected in the act of carrying away and trying to negotiate the sale of sundry valuable articles. He was now thoroughly brought to bay. The wonder is how he should have continued his depredations for such a length of time.

One morning, a great crowd is collected in the county court-house. The public prosecutor arrives with his indictment. From a side-door is brought in the person to be tried, in charge of two officers, and all in their eager curiosity stretch forward to see a man who has made himself so notorious. Frank Lorimer is honoured with a seat within the bar, for he has risen to the magistracy through the confidence and good-will of his fellow-citizens. From the seat he occupies he has a full view of Badsley, and can note his appearance and bearing.

What a change from the days in which, as the Great Miner, he swaggered in Princes Street in his fine clothes, his brooch, his gold chain, and his ostentatiously exhibited diamond ring! He was scarcely recognisable as the same person. His dark hair had been superseded by a brown wig (not paid for). His attire was most abject; it consisted of an old drab great-coat, closely buttoned up to the chin, and considerably ragged at the cuffs. Round his neck was a high black stock, shewing not a bit of shirt, and it seemed doubtful if he had one. His face, well shaved, kept up an air of confidence and audacity. But it was all assumption. He knew his fate was sealed.

The sheriff took his seat on the bench, the indictment was read, and the question was put.

to Badsley, guilty or not guilty? He could not deny the numerous charges of fraud brought against him, and with a view to mitigation of punishment, he pleaded guilty to several of them. The venerable judge, who is remembered for his genial and benevolent disposition, spoke solemnly to the culprit; reminding him of wasted opportunities of well-doing, and the long course of miserable crimes in which he had indulged. The sentence he pronounced was confinement, with hard labour, for twelve months in Bridewell. And so, away was led the outcast Great Miner to his doom. No one pitied him, any more than they would pity the chaining up of a wild beast.

Some pity, however, was felt for Badsley's two daughters, who had been dragged about by him, and vexatiously subjected to his caprices. As they had no claim on the Gilroys, they fell to the charge of their grandmother at Bristol. At her very advanced age, she was ill qualified for having this unpleasant duty imposed on her. But she had no choice in the matter, and could scarcely avoid being conscious that in having manœuvred to get her daughter married to an adventurer, she had exposed herself to a number of far from agreeable contingencies; not the least of these being the probability of having to take charge

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of several grandchildren, when least able to encounter such a responsibility. It might be well for scheming mammas to keep this species of contingency in remembrance.

Shall we follow Badsley to his cell, and see the end of him? There, along with two or three other prisoners, dressed in coarse garments, was the once Great Miner seen untwisting old tarry ropes, and plaiting the material into door-mats. The cell was one of a series arranged in a semicircle, open with bars on one side; the whole, piled tier above tier, being within view of the keeper, like the cages of a menagerie. It was a miserable sight; nevertheless, we must rejoice that the law makes some such provision for the reception of persons whom no admonition will check, no experience instruct, no ordinary suffering intimidate.

Badsley was now in about the most degrading of all positions. Did he reflect on his misdeeds? Did he ever think of the wrong he had done to Ailie Gilroy? Probably not. He scouted and held in derision all human laws:

‘His own opinion was his law.’

The chaplain of the prison reported that he was obdurate and silent; was always brooding, apparently, under a notion of being ill-used. And in

that unrepentant state did Badsley die. Asiatic cholera visited the prison, and made havoc among the inmates. Predisposed for the attacks of this virulent disease, he sank under it in less than twelve hours. He died in the bed of a felon, and was laid unblest, unhonoured, in a felon's grave.

The chaplain was the first to communicate this intelligence to the widow of the deceased. Ailie was now free. How her heart bounded with the thought! With the sensation of escape from the wretch who had marred her happiness in life, were mingled feelings of pity. Great as were the wrongs she had experienced, she neither at this time nor afterwards spoke vengefully of Badsley. She thought, if she did not say, of him, in the language of Queen Katharine :

‘ So may he rest ; his faults lie gently on him.’

Of the possibility of forming any new matrimonial connection, she did not think. Buoyant as she had been throughout her sore trials, her health had suffered, and was now irretrievably shattered. Her fatigue and exposure in that inclement winter night, when she fled with her child, had laid the foundation of a malady, the cure of which seemed to be past the reach of art. Long she contended against it, and in her

cagerness to do good in the insalubrious districts of the city, she was perhaps less careful than the nature of her complaint admonished.

Ailie's failing health was a calamity, not to herself alone. She could not encourage the tender aspirations of Frank—good, dear Frank Lorimer—who kept himself single for her sake. Frank, she hoped, would marry one more worthy of him. Frank, however, had no such intention. He saw from Ailie's state of health that marriage with her was now out of the question. Still, he did not the less love Ailie. And Ailie as enduringly loved Frank. It was a pure love on both sides until death. Circumstances had frustrated their marriage. But nothing could obliterate their mutual affection.

Years had fled on. Freddy, no longer a child, is a youth of cultured mind and correct principle, established abroad in an honourable career. Ailie is a confirmed invalid, barely able to creep about the little lawn in which Pan lies playing on his reed. Frank Lorimer, after a successful course of industry, has attained a position to which, in early days, when writing the verses 'To Ailie,' he never thought of aspiring. The world had changed with Ailie and Frank, and with everybody. Old fashions had given place to new. The days of

stage-coaches had passed away, and there had ensued the era of railways and electric telegraphs.

Near the close of a year which it is not needful to particularise, Frank, broken down more by mental than physical exertion, found it desirable to seek for some reinvigoration in the climate of the south of Europe. But, to leave Ailie! The thought was painful; and the only atom of consolation was, that he could be recalled hastily, should such be at all necessary.

‘You are to promise to send for me, Ailie, if you become worse,’ said Frank. ‘I will go away only on that condition. Do you promise?’

‘Yes, yes, Frank; I promise,’ responded Ailie. ‘But do not alarm yourself. I am a little better, and think I shall hold on till the spring—perhaps for another year. So, good-bye, Frank. Do not be vexed on my account. Go away, and get well, and be happy.’

On this understanding, Frank set out on his expedition. He loitered, advantageously, for a time at Mentone and San Remo, in the Riviera, and thence proceeded to the north of Italy.

He had frequent communications with the Gilroys, and, from what he heard, did not apprehend any immediate crisis in the health of the

being to whom he was most devoted on earth. He even, from what was said, did not despair of a considerable improvement before his return. These were fond delusions. Winter, in any part of Great Britain, with its fogs, drizzle, and cold searching winds, is a season of jeopardy for invalids. Numerous are the luxuries that can be procured, but among these cannot be included the luxury of being able to sit in the enjoyment of genial sunshine in the open air. No, that we cannot get. If it be wished, we must quit our comfortable insular home, and travel in search of it a thousand miles southward.

Seated under the vines and fig-trees at Bellaggio, on the lake of Como, Frank inhaled the breeze from the Alps, tempered by the sunshine, while all around lay a world of beauty.

‘Ah,’ thought he, ‘that poor Ailie could have been here! The lamp of life might have been effectually trimmed and revived under the influence of this beneficent climate.’

As these thoughts crowded through his mind, he was startled from his reverie by the receipt of a telegram. It was brief and alarming:

‘Ailie is dying. Come, if possible, to see her.’

In an hour, Frank Lorimer was on his way home. He crossed the Great St Bernard on a

sledge amidst the snow; and proceeding by railway through Switzerland and France, paused not till he was in England. The mental agony of the journey was indescribable. On the third day, at noon, he was at the door of the old villa at Edinburgh, breathless with anxiety to know if he was in time to see his dear Ailie in life.

The door was open. The house was strangely silent. Was the silence that of death? Without knocking, Frank entered and ascended the stair. On the landing-place at the top stood Jenny Barry.

‘Is she alive?’ asked he in a whisper.

‘Yes; but go into the room softly.’

Jenny opened the door of the drawing-room, into which, from its spaciousness, the invalid had been removed for the sake of air. On entering the apartment, a saddening scene was disclosed. The chief members of the family were assembled near the bed of the dying Ailie. All were silent and sorrowful. Henny, the eldest sister, beckoned Frank to approach.

With a heart swelling with emotion, he approached the couch on which lay stretched his beloved Ailie. Tastefully and loosely dressed in white, she was pallid, but beautiful. Though speechless, she was still conscious. Beside her

was Aunt Tolmie's fan—the fan which had been so dearly cherished in memory of Jamie Galbraith. It had been brought from its repository to fan the languishing invalid. Depending from the head of the couch was Aunt Tolmie's watch, which, according to promise, had been preserved with affectionate care. The old and well-known guitar, which had once been handled with so much brilliancy, now lay mute on a side-table. All these arrangements were taken in at a glance.

Frank's attention was riveted on Ailie, whom he was now to see alive for the last time. In her right hand, she held the precious valentine, from which, even in death, she could not be parted. At sight of Frank, a smile of recognition passed over her wan countenance. She held out her hand, and, in doing so, the valentine dropped on her bosom.

Kneeling down, Frank kissed the attenuated hand, and bathed it with his tears. It was one of those solemn moments which leave an ineffaceable impression on the memory. And it is at such moments that we have, as it were, a glimpse into eternity. Ailie's eyes were closing on that world in which she had met with hard usage, and were about to open on a world of spirits, among whom griefs and tears are unknown.

With her hand lovingly held by Frank, Ailie gave the last faint smile of happiness before departure. She seemed as if listening to the choir of angels ever bright and fair, who, with shining robes, were hailing her entrance to the realms of the blessed, and in which glorious throng she trusted she was to be joined by Frank, never more to be separated from him.

Thus, with her hand tenderly in his, and with the valentine close to her heart, the gentle and confiding AILIE GILROY passed away to her everlasting rest !

THE END.

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